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PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.

AFLOAT WITH CAPTAIN KIDD.

By CAPT. THOS. H. WILSON.



As the brave youth was about to be beaten down and slain, all at once Wintermore came rushing toward the pirates who assailed Jack. "Avast, my hearties. I order ye to spare this boy!" he shouted.

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PLUCK AND LUCK

Stories of Adventure

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Afloat With Captain Kidd

OR,

A BOY AMONG THE PIRATES

By CAPT. THOS. H. WILSON

CHAPTER I.

THE DAYS OF THE OLD BUCCANEERS—ABOARD THE BRIG "QUEEN."

The sea has its thrilling romances as well as the land. There is the slave-chase, the pirate hunting, the ocean duel, the heavy sea battle, the carousing on shore; to say nothing of the wreck and fire in mid-ocean.

But young Jack Marlin, coming down to Bristol from his old home in Baysport, thought more of the romance of old ocean than of its manifold perils and privations.

We are writing of two hundred years ago, when piracy was rife upon the high seas, when the lumbering stage coach was the only means of travel in Merry England, and when bold highwaymen haunted every stage route in the land.

But the Bristol mail coach had made the trip from Baysport through the quiet country, and across the lonely heaths unmolested and unstopped, just as though there was not a highwayman in all England.

The coach pulled up at the Royal George, a famous hostelry of those good old days, in the central part of the great shipping port, and Jack Marlin was the first one of the passengers to alight.

He had his box taken into the inn, and having made some inquiries, walked down toward the docks and the waterside.

Jack Marlin had come down to Bristol meaning to ship on some likely vessel as an able seaman. He was twenty years of age, and a manly youth in every way. England, even in those days produced few finer specimens of the Anglo-Saxon man. Jack was six feet tall, and well proportioned. He had fair curly hair, dark blue eyes, and complexion as pure as a girl's. He was as the barmaids of the Royal George commented among themselves, "as fine a lad as ever came down to old Bristol town."

Jack had two objects in going to sea. In the first place, he was fond of the salt water, and a sailor's son. In the second place, he had his own living to make, and he understood the calling of a sailor.

His mother died when he was very young, and he had found a foster mother in an old maid aunt, who had kept his father's

house in Baysport for years, and sought to bring him up in the way that he should go.

Jack's father was a sea captain, and when he was seventeen, the lad began to sail the seas with his father. The latter was a man of some education. He taught his son to be not only a good foremast hand and all-round sailor, but also instructed him in the art of navigation, until at the age of twenty, Jack was competent to take an observation and accurately figure out the latitude and longitude of a ship anywhere on the wide and pathless ocean. Indeed, the youth was fully competent to navigate a vessel—much more so, in fact, than many a full-fledged captain who sailed out of Bristol Bay.

But Jack knew he was too young to secure an officer's berth.

The circumstances which compelled the youth to go to sea were not uncommon ones. He had been left at home, when his father sailed on his last voyage, two years previously. The vessel, commanded by Captain Marlin, was called the Caroline. She was bound to the West Indies, and she reached her port in safety. There she discharged her cargo, and took on a heavy freight, including a large quantity of wool, which a Spanish buccaneer had brought to Havana, and there sold. And it was known there was a deal of money on board—money and gold. She started on the return voyage to England in fine weather, but she did not make port, and she was never heard of again. In the Admiralty records she was set down as "lost at sea, with all hands."

All the savings of Jack's father were invested in the lost ship, and by some unexplained oversight the insurance had been allowed to run out, so the loss of the Caroline left Jack penniless. Even the house at Baysport was a rented one.

For two years, since the loss of the Caroline, Jack had found employment at Baysport and thus supported his aged aunt and himself. But the fever of the sea was in his veins. He longed once more to be afloat on the wide ocean, and he would have shipped long ago but for the entreaties of his foster mother, who was in ill health, and who then, too, the fate of his father had inspired the aged woman with a new terror of the sea.

But a few weeks before that fine day in the early summer, when Jack came down to Bristol, the good old lady herself sailed away upon the unknown voyage of the hereafter, and after her death the youth felt free to follow his own inclinations.

As he walked along the Bristol docks his way lay in sight of a great multitude of vessels of all rigs and nations. In some sailors were singing at their work. In others there were men aloft, high over his head, clinging to threads that looked like those of a spider's web. The smell of tar and salt was in the air. He saw remarkable figureheads that had all been far over the ocean. There were many old sailors with rings in their ears and whiskers curled in ringlets, and tarry pigtails and their swaggering, rolling sea walk.

But our young sailor was bound for a shipping office, and he went on rapidly until he reached it. As he entered the dingy little room, strong with tobacco smoke, a tall, lantern-jawed man with a thin, pale face and red chin whiskers, dressed in a rough pilot cloth suit came out. He almost ran into Jack, who stepped aside with a polite word or two.

The stranger looked Jack over as he said:

"Are you looking for a ship, my lad?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ever been to sea?"

"Yes. I'll ship as able seaman."

"I'm Captain John Nelson, of the brig, the Queen, bound for the West Indies with a cargo of miscellaneous goods. You can sign with me if you like. We sail to-morrow morning. Step this way and you can see my craft."

"All right, sir," answered the lad, and he followed Captain Nelson a few paces.

"There she is," said the latter, pausing and pointing.

Jack saw he indicated a brig in the harbor opposite the shipping office. The youth looked at this brig with admiration.

She was certainly one of the handsomest models of her day he had ever seen. Her bows were clean and sharp, her cut-water a graceful curve with a fine sweep aft, and enough swell of the sides to promise stability. Her figurehead was a mermaid, painted in gold. Jack at once expressed himself as well pleased with the appearance of the Queen.

Then he went into the shipping office with the captain, and a little later he walked out, having duly signed as one of the crew of Captain Nelson's fine brig.

Jack promised to report on board at sunset. He went back to the Royal George and there he found a crowd collected around a constable, who was nailing a notice upon the posting board at the front of the inn.

At first Jack could not see the notice for the crowd, but he gathered from the men about him that for some days the rumor, amazing and improbable though it seemed, had been mysteriously circulated that the most notorious and desperate pirate captain of that, or any other age, was in England in disguise, and the men said the constable was nailing up a reward notice. When the crowd separated somewhat, Jack saw that this was so. He read from the notice that a reward of five thousand pounds would be paid for the capture of the notorious pirate, Captain Kidd, dead or alive.

Then followed a lengthy description of the great buccaneer.

While Jack was reading the reward notice, a tall, dark-faced sailor-looking man, who wore a full beard, as black as jet, and who had the scar of an old saber cut across his cheek, came up, and stood beside Jack eyeing the notice in a squinting way, and seeming to find the task of reading it a difficult one.

"I say, shipmate, if so be you kin read, you'd do me a favor if you'd just tell me the meanin' o' that 'ere? I ain't a scholar in the way o' book learnin', an' I can't quite figger it out," said the strange sailor as Jack was turning away.

"I'll read it for you," answered Jack, pleasantly, and he did so.

"Good! That pirate ought to be hung and quartered, an' I—Zac Wintermore—ud like ter have a hand in it. But I don't think Captain Kidd ud be fool enough to come on shore in England," said the sailor, walking into the inn with Jack.

There they exchanged some more remarks, and Jack told Wintermore he had just signed articles for a voyage aboard the brig the Queen.

"Well, stop my grog if this ain't a jolly go! You an' I are goin' to be shipmates, my lad, for I signed with Captain Nelson o' the Queen myself yesterday!" exclaimed Wintermore, seeming pleased.

Soon after that Jack found himself alone. At sunset he boarded the Queen, and his box was brought aboard. Captain Nelson met him on the quarter deck. With him was a thick-set, heavy-visaged man, with a grog-reddened nose and eyes, and dirty yellowish beard. Captain Nelson said this man was first mate, Mr. Drom. Jack felt at once that Drom was a ruffian and bully. His character seemed stamped upon his brutal face. A weather-beaten man with gray hair and whiskers came up as Jack saluted the captain and the first mate. This personage was Mr. Hanson, the second mate, as the captain also made known.

The captain turned away, and Drom roared out at Jack:

"Come! Come! Tumble along for'ard, git yer kit into the fo'castle an' then stand by to lend a hand on deck. I'll have no loafing on this ship! Smart is my word fer a crew, an' I'll make 'em smart if they don't look lively. Haw! Haw! Haw!"

Jack looked at the ruffianly mate with contempt, but he carried his box into the forecastle. There he found Wintermore and others of the crew. He returned to the deck directly and busied himself there until it was time to turn in.

In the morning it was but a short job to liberate the brig from her moorings. Sails were spread, and favored by wind and tide, the brig got under way. To the starboard lay the land and the brig soon swept into the blue water of the English Channel.

With the main tack aboard, and the wind a couple of points abaft the beam, the Queen began to show her sailing qualities.

She raised the foam on her weather bow nearly as high as the catshead, and over her lee bulwarks the froth rushed swiftly past.

The deck was soon cleared and the crew mustered aft to be divided into watches. Jack, much to his chagrin, was assigned to the port, or first mate's watch. And the more the youth saw of Mr. Drom, the more he disliked him.

Jack was at work with others, washing down and scrubbing the deck, when the captain came up from the cabin, accompanied by a fair young girl of sixteen or seventeen. She was a perfect type of the English gentlewoman, with delicate complexion and soft, dark eyes.

Until that moment Jack did not know there was a lady aboard. As he looked at her covertly, with admiration in his glance, he heard the captain call her "Miss Clayton," and a little later, overhearing a conversation between the mates, he learned the young lady was the captain's ward, and that she was going out to the West Indies to make her home with distant relatives who resided there.

That day, when Jack took his trick at the wheel, Miss Clayton came up and spoke to him. She asked him a number of questions about the management of the ship with an air of charming curiosity. Of course he was only too happy to answer pleasantly, and the acquaintance thus begun soon ripened into friendship.

But Mr. Drom frowned upon Jack when he saw him speaking to the young lady, and several times he told the lad it was not the place of a common sailor to address the captain's

ward. Naturally this angered Jack, but he said he was gentleman enough to answer any lady when she spoke to him.

One day, when the brig was ten days out from Bristol, Captain Nelson came on deck, and saw Miss Clayton standing at the wheel with Jack. Coming forward he said in loud, blustering tones:

"Come, miss, I've had enough of this. Go below and don't let me catch you speaking to this fellow again. A common sailor is no fit associate for you. And as for you, Mr. Jack what's-your-name, the cat-o'-nine-tails shall teach you your place, if you have anything more to say to my ward."

Miss Clayton shot an angry glance at the captain, but without a word she descended to her cabin. Jack was burning with rage, but he knew he would only make matters worse by retorting to his superior and so he held his peace.

Meanwhile serious trouble was brewing in the forecastle and a plot was on foot which threatened soon to transform the peaceful brig into a scene of bloodshed and horror.

From the first day of the voyage the captain and first mate had abused the crew until now they were ripe for open mutiny.

CHAPTER II.

JACK IN IRONS—THE MUTINEERS' SECRET.

Jack had brought some books on navigation, and several nautical instruments aboard in his box, and during the days which had now elapsed since the Queen sailed from Bristol, the crew had found out that he understood navigation, and could handle a ship at sea.

This superior knowledge caused him to be looked up to and respected in the forecastle. Among the common sailors there was apparently not one who knew more about navigation than merely to steer by a compass.

Since the voyage began, Wintermore, the tall, dark-faced sailor, whom Jack had first met at the Royal George, in Bristol, had held himself aloof from the rest of the crew, somewhat, and his silent, taciturn manner won him no friends.

Toward Jack, he was cool and distant from the moment they met for the second time aboard the brig, the night before she sailed. And the youth noted Wintermore seemed preoccupied and strangely alert and watchful. He was always, when on deck, scanning the sea with seemingly intense and eager glances. His conduct puzzled the youth not a little.

Among the men of the crew was a weather-beaten old sea-dog, called Ben Deadlight, and the Queen had not been many days at sea, when Jack became aware of the fact that Wintermore was watching and spying upon the old fellow whenever he had an opportunity to do so.

One night when the crew had been complaining among themselves more bitterly than usual over the yile food furnished to the forecastle and the brutal treatment which all hands received from the captain and first mate, Jack suddenly entering the forecastle saw old Ben Deadlight standing in the middle of the room under the swinging lamp, with what seemed to be a rudely-drawn sea chart in his hand.

The old sea-dog was addressing his shipmates in low and earnest tones, and pointing at the parchment map. Among those present was Wintermore, and Jack saw he seemed to hang upon every word uttered by the speaker with consuming interest.

Upon Jack's appearance, Deadlight ceased speaking and put his map in his pocket. Significant glances traveled around among the men. There was an awkward silence. The youth knew well enough something, which they did not wish him to know about then, had been the subject of Deadlight's earnest remarks.

But he made some cheerful remark, and pretended not to have noticed anything. Before this, the mutterings and threats of the crew had alarmed Jack. He knew a mutiny might occur

at any time. Though he had to admit the men were treated like dogs, and that the food provided them was scarcely fit for swine, he talked to the men and advised them to refrain from any acts of violence.

Truth to say, Jack was resolved to do all in his power to prevent the crew from rising, murdering the officers and seizing the brig, not only because he abhorred such crimes, and regarded no provocation sufficient to justify them, but also for the reason which was nearer to his heart, that he knew sweet Bertha Clayton, the captain's ward, would be in dreadful peril aboard that vessel if it fell into the hands of murderous mutineers.

Jack possessed chivalrous instincts which would have led him to protect any helpless women under similar circumstances, but he had learned to love the captain's beautiful ward, and for her sake he was ready to brave any danger.

The crew had vainly appealed to the captain for better food and more human treatment, and matters grew steadily worse. Seeing he had the support of the captain, Drom, the first mate, became more and more overbearing and brutal in his treatment of the men. Oaths and foul names accompanied by kicks or blows were all the civilities they got from him.

Jack had thus far, however, escaped being assaulted by the brute. Perhaps there was something in the manner of the youth that warned Drom that he would resent a blow.

It was on the day following the night when Jack's sudden appearance in the forecastle interrupted the speech which old Ben Deadlight was making to his shipmates, that an accident occurred, which hastened the outbreak of the storm of human passions, that had been so long brewing aboard the Queen.

Jack was on deck, and the cabin boy, a pale, delicate little lad named Dick Calders, came by Drom's order, to bring a glass of grog. The deck was wet and slippery, and as he approached the mate with the glass on a tray, the little lad slipped, and the glass fell and broke upon the deck.

Drom flew into a rage. A torrent of profanity and vile names fell from his lips, and the frightened cabin boy tremblingly said:

"If you please, sir, the deck is very slippery, and I couldn't help it."

"You'll answer me back, will you, you spawn!" roared Drom, and rushing at the lad, who screamed in fright, he dealt him a terrible blow on the temple with his great fist. The boy fell like a log. The inhuman wretch was about to kick the prostrate boy, when Jack sprang upon him.

"You coward! You brute!" he shouted, seizing Drom by the throat and hurling him away. But instantly the bully came at him furiously. Jack met him with a blow from his right fist under the ear. Drom went down with a crash.

But at that moment Captain Nelson and Hanson, the second mate, who had just come on deck, hurled themselves upon Jack. Then, while he struggled, Drom staggered up and also fell upon the youth. He was borne to the deck.

The crew came rushing up. There were threatening murmurs. All hands looked at Deadlight as if for orders. He shook his head negatively, and those nearest him heard him whisper: "The time to strike ain't quite come yet."

Captain Nelson and the two mates drew their pistols as they witnessed the threatening attitude of the crew.

"Get back to your quarters, you dogs! I'll blow out the brains of the first one of you who dares to dispute my authority or interfere. Mr. Drom, you will see that this rascal is put in irons. And I shall attend to it that he is made an example of and punished before the crew for mutiny," cried the captain.

Then men sullenly withdrew, carrying the insensible cabin boy with them. He was taken into the forecastle.

Jack had received a blow which had partially stunned him, and although he was a young giant in physical strength, Drom,

Hanson and the captain managed to hold him down until the boatswain, whom Nelson ordered so to do, quickly brought the handcuffs.

The manacles were fastened upon his wrists and then he was allowed to get upon his feet.

Just then Bertha Clayton appeared upon the deck, and as Jack stood there in irons looking defiance at the brutal men who had manacled him the young girl approached.

"For shame!" she cried facing the captain, fearlessly. "I saw it all, and the sailor is not to blame! Had I been a man in his place I would have done as he did! Oh, Captain Nelson, do not punish the young man! It will be an act of cruel injustice to do so."

"Go below! How dare you interfere?" thundered the irate captain, and giving Jack a look of sympathy which made his heart leap, the young girl slowly walked to the companion-way and descended.

A little later Jack Marlin found himself a prisoner in the hold. He had been thrust into a dark, evil-smelling compartment and the door was locked upon him.

That night, Little Dick Calders, the cabin boy, died in delirium in the forecastle, and the men swore they'd have Drom's life. They were for rising at once, and falling upon the officers.

"Wait until midnight, lads! Wait until I've made sure that Jack Marlin will serve us as we've planned, and then at them," said Deadlight.

Wintermore supported him and the men agreed to wait.

Jack Marlin had fallen into a doze when he heard a noise at the door of the gloomy compartment of the hold. In a moment the portal opened and old Ben Deadlight entered. He carried a lantern, and the light dispelled the shadows. The old sailor carefully closed the door and then coming close to Jack, he said in low tones:

"Jack, my lad, I've come by vote o' all o' the crew to let ye inter a secret o' mine, which I have already told the others, an' to make ye an offer. We are goin' to make way with the murderer o' little Dick to-night an' seize the ship. It's decided on. Nothin' on earth can stop us, an' all who are not with us will suffer. Ye understand, lad? You have all along preached agin mutiny, so we didn't trust you. But now we've got to do so, fer I believe you are the only one among the crew who kin navigate the brig after we've got her. The long an' short on it is, Jack, we want you to be captain. Come, what do you say? Of course you'll agree, an' then I'll set you free."

"Good Heavens! you want me to put my neck in the halter—to become a captain of mutineers? You know as well as I do the punishment for mutiny is death! But tell me, shipmate, what is to be the fate of Captain Nelson, second mate Hanson, and—and—the lady—Miss Clayton?"

"The men won't be satisfied until they have killed Drom. That's sworn to. But we have planned to set the captain and Hanson adrift in one o' the boats."

"And the lady? Good Heavens, you are men. You do not mean to harm that poor, defenseless girl, who has always had a kind word and a smile for all of you?"

"Well, I dunno. • There's others as has an eye to beauty as well as yourself, me lad," answered Deadlight, with a cunning, sidelong look at Jack.

"She shall not be harmed! Look here, Deadlight, you can't get along without me to navigate the brig, and you know it. You have got to make a bargain. I'll go against my will. I'll agree to navigate the brig for you, to any port you name, if you and all the crew will swear that the young lady shall not be harmed—that she shall be left to my exclusive care," said Jack, desperately.

"Good! That's all right! I'll answer for the crew now. We all seed you were sweet on the girl, and we counted on suthin' like this. There won't be no trouble with the crew.

They won't go agin what I say. Cause why? Cause I'm leadin' 'em to fortune. An' that brings me to speak o' the secret I said suthin' about at first. You see, lad, I was one o' the crew o' the ship called the Caroline, what was lost two years ago—Captain Marlin, same name as yours—in command. She was loaded with goods from the West Indies, includin' a lot of wool an' money an' gold, to the value of two hundred thousand pounds, it was said. Well, she sprung a leak, fourteen days out from Havana, and after bein' blowed outen her course for five days, durin' which time we worked the pumps day and night, we had to abandon her. That is, all the crew, save me an' the first mate, took to the boats. The ship was settling an' the crew refused to pump. There was a mad fight for the boats. Me an' the first mate were knocked down an' left behind. But the ship didn't sink. I think the weight o' the water in her calked the leak holes with sodden wool. We drove on before the gale, and finally the ship went ashore on the sandy beach of an unknown island.

"We got the gold ashore and buried it. Later, the ship went to pieces in a heavy storm. I've got a chart of the island, and when we've taken the brig we're bound to go to it and get the buried gold," said Deadlight.

CHAPTER III.

AFLOAT WITH CAPTAIN KIDD.

When Jack heard that the mutineer had been a member of the crew of his father's lost ship, he was thrilled and startled, and he listened in breathless interest to the story of the fate of the Caroline.

He saw that Deadlight evidently had no thought that he was related to the captain of the ill-fated vessel, and all things considered, he thought it best not to enlighten him upon that point.

And Jack believed it was a certain thing that his father and all hands, who took to the boats when the Caroline was thought to be sinking, had been lost.

After a pause, Deadlight went on to say:

"The first mate, who reached the island with me, got the captain's instruments ashore, and also the sea charts. He said the island wasn't put down on the charts, an' so he concluded it wasn't known.

"With the instruments he made out the sittyness o' the island as ter latitude an' longitude, an' arter we'd buried the gold he made a map o' the island an' marked the spot where we buried the gold. Outen the wreckage o' the ship we made a raft, and put to sea, when we had almost used up all the feed what we'd got outen ther ship, fer there was no food to be got on the island, save some shell fish from the beach. We found fresh water, though. On the raft we drifted fer days and days, until we had eaten every scrap of food and drank the last drop of water. Then ther mate went mad, and one night he jumped into the sea. After that I lost my head, an' when I came to myself, I was aboard an English vessel, what had picked me up, more dead than alive. I pretended to have lost my memory, an' the men who had saved me got nothin' out of me, fer I had made up my mind to keep my secret, an' some day git the buried gold off the island. I had the mate's map, and here it is."

Deadlight drew from his pocket the rudely sketched map which Jack had seen him showing to the crew in the forecastle and the lad looked at it. He saw a diagram of an island with an inlet, or bay, on the northern coast, and on the shore, at some distance from the water, was a cross in red beside a drawing of a tall cocoanut palm. The latitude and longitude were marked on the island.

"That cross under the tree shows where we buried the gold. The crew knows all about it from me. The agreement is you're to navigate the brig to the island; the crew is to divide

one-half the gold between them, and the other half is my share. As Captain you'll have double share," said Deadlight.

"I want none of the gold; only keep faith with me. Leave the young lady unmolested in my care and I'll fetch the brig to the island. But if you break your word regarding Miss Clayton, you can kill me, but I'll not navigate the brig for you."

"All right, lad, and now I'll go. When the brig is ours I'll come for you. Then, if you're ever hauled up for this job, you kin swear you had no hand in the matter, being a prisoner in irons at the time," answered Deadlight.

He went out and fastened the door. Jack waited in the darkness, his soul filled with horror as he thought of what was soon to happen.

Some time elapsed; then he heard the tramping of heavy feet on the deck and the sound of men's voices. All at once the muffled report of a pistol reached him, and one terrible yell of mortal agony uttered in a man's voice.

Then the noise on deck went on. He heard fierce shouts and laughter. Finally a cheer sounded from many voices, and presently the door opened and in came Deadlight.

He unlocked the irons on Jack's wrists as he said:

"The job is done. Drom was killed by a single pistol shot, and the men are about setting the captain and Hanson adrift. But afore we made a move I locked the door o' the gal's cabin, an' here's the key. You'll find your prize safe. Come on deck. The men all knew the agreement what you an' me has come to, an' they have sworn to stand by it."

Jack followed the chief of the mutineers on deck without a word. It was a bright, moonlight night, and as he gained the deck he saw one of the ship's boats floating away astern. In it was Captain Nelson and the mate Hanson. They turned their pale and frightened faces to the brig, and Jack thought, that to his dying day, he would never forget the awful looks of mute despair upon their countenances.

But the boat soon drifted out of sight, as the brig swept onward under full sails, carried by a fine wind from the northwest.

Deadlight, Wintermore, and the others of the crew then gathered around Jack, and he said:

"If I am to be captain, and bring the brig to Deadlight's island, we must have order aboard, so I propose that you choose a first and second mate, and agree that all hands be-

ve as if the brig had not been seized. The best way to the island is by the way of Cape Horn. If we sail southwest we've only the Horn to double, then we head southwest, and two weeks' sailing ought to fetch us to the island."

"Right you are, Jack!" cried Deadlight, and all hands seemed to approve. There was some talk, and then Deadlight was chosen first mate and a sailor named Beam was selected a second mate.

Everything being settled in this regard, Jack asked what the plans of the men were to be after they had found the island and secured the gold.

"You'll know all about that when the time comes. We'll get the gold first, an' talk about what comes next then," said Deadlight, quickly, and Jack was unable to get any further information.

As soon as possible, leaving Deadlight in charge of the deck, Jack went down to Bertha Clayton's cabin. He tapped at the door and then unlocked it, using the key the mutineer had given him.

Bertha met him at the door. He saw she was fully dressed, and that she had been crying bitterly.

"Oh, you are the only friend I have now! You will protect me? I know all! I have heard the men. They have killed Mr. Drom, and set Captain Nelson and Mr. Hanson adrift. The mutineers have seized the vessel!" she said in trembling tones.

"I will do my best and I mean to save you from all harm," he said.

Then he closed and secured the door. After that in the briefest terms he explained to her the leading motive of the mutiny and all about the agreement he had made with Deadlight and the crew.

"I trust you. But in the end how are we to escape from these terrible men?" she answered.

Jack was oppressed by the awful uncertainty of the future, but he said hopefully:

"I shall have to be guided by circumstances. But I mean to outwit the mutineers and get you safely away from them. That is all I can say, though would to Heaven I could speak more definitely."

She gave him her hand and they conversed for a few moments longer. Then he withdrew.

At the head of the companionway he passed Wintermore. The moonlight fell clear upon the swarthy face of the strange, silent and reserved sailor, and Jack was positively startled by the expression of evil exultation which showed upon his countenance.

When Jack had gone across the deck, Wintermore fell to muttering to himself.

"By the Lord, it's my island Deadlight has told of! Ha! all things are working for me, as I never dared hope!" he said, half under his breath.

The conduct of the mutineers thereafter was a source of agreeable surprise to Jack.

They went about their duties cheerfully, and being served with the best food aboard they seemed content. Upon one thing Jack congratulated himself much, and that was because there was very little rum or strong drink aboard. He managed to keep the crew fairly sober until all the liquor save a small quantity which he had secreted was consumed.

Then men had their hopes of gaining sudden wealth raised to the highest pitch, and as the realization of their wishes depended upon Jack's taking them to the island, they kept their part of the agreement.

Bertha Clayton was treated respectfully by all hands. But she rarely came on deck. Every day she and Jack became nearer and dearer to each other, and one evening, ten days after the mutiny, the lad made the soft confession of his love and they plighted their troth.

Each day now the crew were eagerly looking to sight Deadlight's island and a lookout was constantly kept aloft.

On the evening of the thirteenth day after the mutiny, Wintermore was in the cross-trees acting as the lookout. The sky was cloudless, and when the sun had set the light lingered upon the sea.

Wintermore stared fixedly over the waste of waters, southward in the direction where Deadlight's island must lay.

All at once the dark-faced sailor gave a tremendous start. Then he drew a hidden sea-glass from his pocket and put it to his eyes. Long and earnestly he looked through it. He had seen a small, dark object on the southern horizon. The glass told him it was a vessel. He trembled with anticipation, until half an hour later he made out the character of the vessel. Then he hugged himself with evident delight. It seemed he recognized the distant craft, which he alone had sighted, for he muttered:

"It's my schooner! The Rover, at last! She's beating off the island on the lookout, I'll be bound!"

Just then Jack shouted to the lookout:

"Do you make out any signs of the island?"

"No. But there's a cloud that looks like wind rising in the south," answered Wintermore, falsely.

The night wore on and Wintermore remained at the lookout post aloft. The sky became gloomy and the night dark-

ened. Under cover of the gloom, the vessel which the false lookout had sighted, drew nearer. At length Wintermore produced a small sea lantern, with red glass sides. He saw the deck was well nigh deserted and that no one was looking. Then he flashed the red light of his lantern three times in a circle, swinging it at arm's length. The signal was answered from the south not far away, by a showing of the same red light flash. Then Wintermore descended from the cross-trees. The wind had fallen. The brig floated but slowly. Wintermore went into the forecastle. And still he was the only one who knew any craft was near the brig.

Anon as Jack paced the deck, and the men of the watch then on duty lounged about, the young captain suddenly caught the sound of muffled oars. The craft which Wintermore had sighted, had drawn very near in the gloom without showing a single light, and from her four boats crowded with as villainous a looking set of cut-throats as ever scuttled a ship, had been lowered.

Jack sprang to the rail, as he heard the faint sounds of oars.

"Pipe all hands to arms!" he shouted instantly to the mutineer mate, Deadlight. "Let every man stand ready to repel boarders!" he added, as a sudden flash of lightning illuminated the sea, and showed him the coming boats were filled with savage-looking armed men, and beyond them he saw a black schooner of rakish build.

Then men came tumbling up. The arms rack at the main mast, was cleared of its weapons, as each man hastily armed himself. All was confusion and alarm. Wild shouts went up from the approaching boats, as the men in the schooner learned they were discovered.

"Surrender! If ye show fight, every one o' ye shall walk the plank!" shouted a ruffian in the foremost boat.

"They are pirates! God help us, mates, but let us make a good fight, for we can hope for no mercy if we surrender!" shouted Jack, and a cold perspiration broke out all over him, as he thought of the fate of his promised bride, if she fell into the hands of the brutal sea-robbers.

The men gathered along the deck to repel boarders, but the pirates numbered forty odd men. The crew was outnumbered more than two to one. Despite the fact that they fought desperately to repel them, the pirates soon came swarming upon the deck.

Then followed a terrible strife—a hand to hand battle with cutlasses, boarding-spikes and pistols. The crew of the Queen was beaten back and massacred ruthlessly.

Presently Jack, who had fought with all the fury of despair, was holding the head of the companionway alone against half a dozen pirates, meaning to lay down his life before the wretches should descend to Bertha's quarters, when, as the brave youth was about to be beaten down and slain, all at once Wintermore came rushing from the forecastle toward the pirates who assailed Jack.

"Avast, my hearties! I order ye to spare this man!" he shouted in tones of command, and at the same time he tore off a false beard and wig.

"The captain! The captain! Hurrah! Hurrah!" yelled the pirates, falling back at once.

Wintermore gained Jack's side.

"For Heaven's sake, man, tell me what this means!" cried the astonished youth.

"It means I am really Captain Kidd, the pirate king!" answered the other.

CHAPTER IV.

JACK TAKES THE PIRATE'S OATH.

Speechless with surprise, and almost breathless from the exertions which he had made, in holding the companion stairs

against the pirates, Jack Marlin stared at the now unmasked chief of the buccaneers.

He saw that the undisguised face of the man whom, until that thrilling moment, he had known only as Wintermore, a common sailor, accorded perfectly with the description of Captain Kidd, as he had read it in the reward notice at the Royal George, in Bristol.

But of course, the fact of the prompt recognition of their chief by the pirates was alone sufficient evidence that he was actually the famous king of buccaneers, whom he claimed to be.

"My lad," said Kidd, not unkindly, as the pirates fell back from the assault upon Jack, and cheers for the chief who had so abruptly revealed himself continued to ring from one end of the vessel to the other, "you must see this brig is my prize, for already all the crew, save perhaps half a dozen, who have barricaded themselves in the forecastle, are slain. So there is nothing for it, but for you to surrender. Give me your word that you will do nothing further to resist my men, and I will place you under parole, for the present. I have taken a liking to you my lad, and I shall have something of much importance to say to you later on."

Of course Jack realized that it would be fatal folly to attempt any further resistance, and that he could not hope to save his life even for a time, save by immediate surrender.

But even at that time of peril thoughts of the dear girl with whom he had plighted his troth were uppermost in his mind, and he felt that he would rather perish with her than live to see her fall into the hands of the brutal buccaneers. So he cried out:

"But the lady, Miss Clayton; Wintermore, or as I should say, Captain Kidd, you will not give her up to your ruffianly men? As I live, I would slay her with my own pistol, and then turn the weapon upon myself rather than that such a terrible thing should come to pass!"

The dark-faced pirate chief regarded the excited, eloquent speaker with a cunning smile in which there lurked a certain expression of satisfaction which the youth noticed, but was at that time unable to understand.

"I have had my eyes about me aboard this ship. I know you and the girl are sweethearts, but there is a rule among my band which allows the man who first seizes and claims a female on board a captured ship, to have her for his prize. Even I am powerless to set aside this or the other rules of my buccaneers, which all have sworn to obey, under the penalty of death for breaking our laws," answered Captain Kidd.

"Then Bertha, my loved one, shall become the prize of death! We will die together and the good Lord will forgive us, even as he will yet punish you and your fiendish crew!" cried Jack.

And brandishing his cutlass, he turned, and was about to dart down the companion stairs to Bertha's cabin.

But, with a leap of cat-like quickness, the pirate chief suddenly placed himself between Jack and the first step on the stairs.

He swung his cutlass and cried out:

"Halt! Halt, on your life, lad!"

But Jack was carried away by the madness of despair.

"Stand aside, or by my life, I'll cut you down!" he shouted.

The men of the crew who had desisted from the attack upon Jack, at the command of the chief, advanced again in a threatening way.

Clash! Clash! Clash! sounded the ring of steel on steel, as Jack cut at the pirate chief, meeting the skillfully wielded blade of the other at each stroke.

"Back, men! Leave me to deal with this young firebrand!" cried Kidd to his men.

Muttering, they retired a few paces.

And Jack believed he had begun a duel with the great pirate chief, which could only end in death for his adversary or himself.

But it was not to be. Kidd had plans for the future which impelled him to spare the life of the youth. In a hissing whisper he said to Jack, as he continued to parry the blows which the youth aimed at him with his cutlass:

"Fool! You were too fast! Desist now and surrender, and I'll tell you how to save the girl for yourself. I swear if you do as I say no harm shall come to her."

Jack feared he could not trust the oath of the pirate. And yet in his voice and manner there seemed to be sincerity.

Then, too, he had spoken in so low a tone that his villainous followers could not hear his words.

The brave, desperate youth hesitated.

But suddenly, from the depths, at the foot of the companion stairs, a soft, low voice reached him. He knew the speaker was Bertha.

She said:

"Surrender, Jack, surrender!"

The lad flashed an apprehensive glance at the pirates who were near. He saw that evidently none of them had heard the voice of the maid. That Kidd had heard her was, however, certain.

"I accept your terms—I surrender!" cried Jack, the succeeding instant. He lowered his cutlass and presented the handle to Kidd.

The latter took the weapon, and without moving from his position at the head of the companion stairs, shouted to his men:

"Boatswain Brendreth, pipe all hands here!"

The fighting on the deck of the Queen had already ceased because none of the mutineer crew of the unfortunate brig remained to offer resistance to the buccaneers.

Some of the buccaneers were trying to force the door of the forecastle, where the few survivors of the crew of the Queen had sought refuge.

While the pirate boatswain proceeded to call up all hands, Captain Kidd shouted to his men, who were battering upon the forecastle door:

"Avast there! The men in the forecastle will join us to save their lives! They are all mutineers, anyhow, and they stand to hang if they go to an English port!"

In a few moments all the pirates who survived the battle on the Queen were assembled before Captain Kidd and Jack Marlin.

They were a terrible looking band of sea ruffians of all nationalities, and now blackened with powder smoke, they presented an appearance well calculated to inspire fear and horror in the stoutest heart.

While the pirates were trooping up from all parts of the deck, Captain Kidd whispered to Jack:

"In five minutes, if you will take our oath, you shall be a regular member of our band, and entitled to claim all the rights of such a one under our code of laws. Do you not understand how to take advantage of this to save the girl?"

Jack gave a great start.

His heart leaped in his bosom.

"Yes, I comprehend, and for her sake I'll take the pirates' awful oath," he said, in a whisper.

"Good! You are a sensible lad after all, and as you have shown you are a fighter, the men will welcome you to our ranks. But when you have taken our oath, lose not a moment about looking after the girl," responded Captain Kidd in like tones.

By that time all hands had assembled on the deck before the companionway, and turning to the band, the buccaneer chief raised his hand to enjoin silence.

"Now, listen, men," said he, and the sounds of hoarse and savage voices and the noise of shuffling feet immediately ceased.

Every baleful, blood-shot and glaring eye was fixed upon the pirate king as he went on to say, indicating Jack:

"Men, I have decided to accept this brave lad as a volunteer—as a recruit to our ranks. You have seen he is a brave and desperate fellow, and it is such men that have made the fame and fortune of the buccaneers of the Spanish main. I will now administer the oath which any man who joins us must take."

The pirate chief paused. Then turning to Jack, he said:

"Repeat after me the following oath."

He went on and uttered a terrible oath, whose terms were enough to make any man shudder. The oath was a pledge of faithful adherence to Captain Kidd, and to each and all of the buccaneers of his band as brother to brother, and the vow called down the most awful doom upon the head of him who took it, if he proved untrue to the oath.

But without faltering Jack repeated the horrible and blasphemous oath, at the same time making mental reservations, and having faith to believe the good Lord would pardon him, because he was acting under awful duress not only to preserve his own life, but what was to him the greater incentive, also to save the life of an innocent young girl.

As soon as Jack had taken the pirates' awful oath, the assembled ruffians greeted him with a cheer. His desperate bravery during the battle which had just ended inspired the bloodthirsty ruffians with admiration.

When the cheers ceased, Kidd produced a small manuscript book, and read the following articles of agreement by which his regularly organized band was governed:

"First. Every man is entitled to a vote in all matters of importance, and an equal share in all provisions or strong drink which may be seized. Any man who defrauds the company in plate, jewels, or money shall be landed on a desert island. If he robs a messmate, his ears and nose shall be slit, and then he shall be marooned. No man shall strike another on shipboard, but quarrels shall be settled on shore, with sword or pistol. Any one deserting or leaving his quarters during action shall be put to death. The captain shall receive two shares of every prize. Other officers one and a quarter shares, men one share each. He that first seizes and claims a female aboard a prize shall have her."

CHAPTER V.

UNDER THE BLACK FLAG—BOUND FOR KIDD'S ISLAND.

As Captain Kidd read the last words of the articles of agreement, which showed the buccaneers were a regularly organized band Jack Marlin darted down the companion stairs.

The pirate chief made no attempt to detain him.

But a moment or two elapsed, during which Kidd ordered his men to clear the deck of the dead and attend to their wounded, when Jack reappeared upon the deck.

He led Bertha by the hand and hastily approached the pirate chief, while all the buccaneers who saw him looked with surprise and admiration at the beautiful girl who was his companion.

Bertha was pale and trembling. Under the battery of the fierce, bold glances of the pirates, she seemed terror-stricken, and she clung to Jack as if for protection.

Kidd had given Jack back his sword, after the youth had taken the oath of the buccaneers. Jack held the naked weapon in his hand, and he was firmly resolved to run the first pirate through who should offer the imperiled maid the slightest insult.

"Ho! Ho!" shouted a fierce, scar-faced pirate, who was called Bonnet, and who was Captain Kidd's first officer and the

one who had led the buccaneers in the attack upon the Queen. "Here is something worth while in the way o' a prize! A beauty, an' no mistake!"

As he spoke the ruffian approached, leering at Bertha offensively.

"Stand back!" thundered Jack. "I claim this according to your own rules!"

"Ha! You are a shrewd fellow and I see now you had it in mind to secure the girl when you took our oath. But mind you, I never clapped my two eyes on a girl that so took my fancy as this one, and when we make our island retreat I'll gamble or fight with you for her, just as you like!" cried Bonnet.

"You will do neither. But if you interfere with this lady in any way, either aboard ship or on land, I'll have your life!" retorted Jack.

Just then Captain Kidd came striding up.

"What's this? Ah, Captain Nelson's beautiful ward! Allow me, miss, to introduce myself under my true name. I am Captain Kidd, the buccaneer, a greatly wronged and misjudged man," said he, doffing his hat to the lady and bowing low.

She said no word. In her heart there was nothing but fear and loathing for this man of whose crimes at sea, England had rung for many months.

But Jack hastened to state again that he claimed Bertha as his prize according to the law of the buccaneers.

"You are right, lad! Here, men! This way! Forward all hands!" shouted Kidd.

As the crew came forward he indicated the frightened maiden and Jack, and said:

"Take notice, one and all, Jack Marlin, our new recruit, has seized and claimed this lady as his prize according to our law, and if any man interferes with the lady he shall be called to account and punished. Our laws are made for all alike. The new recruit has to obey all rules, and he shall also profit by them the same as the oldest one of our band. This has always been our way of dealing, and we will not change now."

After that Jack conducted Bertha to her cabin.

As yet he had barely had time to tell her that he had only taken the pirates' vows, and agreed to join them in order to save her. But, now, having locked the cabin door, the youth went on to say:

"And now, dear Bertha, of course you must understand that it is really my purpose to escape with you as soon as any possible opportunity presents itself for us to do so."

"Yes, yes! But such a chance may never come! Oh, I am afraid! You are all I have to depend on. Oh, Jack, if by any chance you were taken from me, while we are in the pirates' power, what an awful fate mine would be!"

"I will guard my life for your sake, dearest!"

"Do so, at all times, and let me tell you I believe that terrible man, who threatened to fight you for me on shore, will try to slay you by foul means, if he cannot force you to an open fight."

"I will be particularly upon my guard against the wretch Bonnet. But is it not strange that a sea murderer, like Captain Kidd, not only spared my life, but showed me how to claim and save you?"

"Yes, it is indeed strange. I can imagine Kidd may think you will make a valuable recruit, but it is remarkable that he should have indirectly aided you to save me from his men."

"I suppose I shall soon learn from Kidd himself why he has favored me, since he said he should have something of importance to say to me anon."

"Where will the Queen be taken by the pirates now, think you, Jack?"

"The island of which Deadlight told the crew must be very

near, and I think it likely that island has become one of the retreats of Captain Kidd, so I presume the Queen will be sailed to the island. Deadlight has been slain, but as Captain Kidd, under the name of Wintermore, shared the secret of the treasure buried on the island by Deadlight, I have no doubt he'll seek for it."

Presently Jack and Bertha heard the murmur of voices from the cabin adjoining the one occupied by the young lady.

The cabin alluded to was the captain's. Jack put his ear against the partition. He made out the voice of Captain Kidd and another speaker. Making Bertha a signal to enjoin silence, Jack glided out of the cabin and noiselessly reached the next door. There he listened.

He recognized the tones of Captain Kidd's companion. He was Bonnet.

For some time Jack eagerly listened to the closed portal of the captain's cabin. The pirate chief and his lieutenant conversed at length. But at last, when he was warned by what they said that they were about to leave the cabin, Jack hastily but noiselessly returned to Bertha.

He hastened to inform the anxious maiden that he had learned from the conversation of the pirates, that Captain Kidd had made a stronghold on the unknown island described by Deadlight, without the knowledge that there was treasure buried there.

Kidd, it seemed, had gone to England in disguise, in order to get a large sum of money which he had deposited for safe-keeping in Bristol. In that town he fell in with Deadlight a week before the Queen sailed. In his cups, Deadlight let drop some remarks which gave Kidd a clew to the old sailor's treasure secret. So as he wanted to escape from England and go to the West Indies where pirates hunted the sea, and as he had also resolved to get the whole of Deadlight's secret out of him, Kidd shipped aboard the Queen.

When the disguised pirate saw the old sailor's chart of the unknown island, on which he had buried the gold, of course he knew it was the very island on which he had made a retreat, since the loss of the good ship the Caroline.

As one of his several vessels was likely to be cruising at no great distance off his island, on the lookout for a vessel which might bring the chief back to his band, as the Queen neared the island, Kidd kept a sharp lookout.

When he discovered the pirate schooner, the signal which he gave with the red lantern, was one which he knew his men would understand to mean he was aboard the Queen, and that they were to capture that vessel.

Kidd stated to Bonnet that he meant the Queen and his schooner, which was called the Rover, should now sail directly to the island which he had taken possession of, and which the pirates had named Kidd's Island.

After Jack had thus related all that he had overheard to Bertha he went on deck. There he learned that the few survivors of the mutineers of the Queen had regularly been sworn in as members of the pirate band.

The deck was cleared and washed down and then all sail was made. The course was toward Kidd's Island. The pirate chief remained aboard the Queen with a crew of his men to work the brig.

Bonnet also stayed aboard the captured brig.

A sufficient number of the pirates to properly man her returned aboard Kidd's schooner, the Rover, and that vessel took the lead.

Not long after the dawn of a new day came, Jack, who had passed the night on guard outside the door of Bertha's cabin, was called by Captain Kidd, who had taken possession of the cabin formerly occupied by the ill-fated Captain Nelson.

The pirate ushered the youth into the room, and having closed the door, he said impressively:

"Now I want to speak to you upon a subject of great importance."

CHAPTER VI.

THE PIRATE'S ISLAND—JACK IS COMPELLED TO FIGHT A DUEL.

Jack felt that Kidd was now about to let him know why he had spared his life and allowed him to save Bertha, at least for the time, and accordingly he listened attentively and with much anxiety, while the pirate proceeded to say:

"Of course you know, my lad, that I am aware of the fact that you have a knowledge of navigation, which enables you to handle a vessel at sea. And after the mutineers of the Queen made you captain, you displayed ability to command and control a ruffianly crew. It is such qualities that I require in men who serve me in positions of trust and command, and this is one reason why I spared your life and allowed you to claim the girl."

Kidd paused for a moment.

But Jack did not speak, and the pirate immediately resumed:

"But this is not all. Did you ever hear your father speak of a merchant of New York called William Kidd?"

"Yes, sir. My father told me some years ago that it was his good fortune to save the life of an English merchant of that name. He said his vessel was in the harbor of New York and he was ashore one night at a waterside inn, when a French desperado and gambler forced a quarrel on William Kidd, who had come to the inn to transact some business with my father. The merchant Kidd was unarmed, and the Frenchman would have run him through and killed him on the spot, had not my father parried the rascal's murderous blow with his cutlass. The Frenchman then fell upon my father, who badly wounded him, and could have slain him had he been disposed to do so," replied Jack.

"Quite right. I see your father told you the story of the affair exactly as it happened. Now did it ever occur to you to connect William Kidd, the honest merchant, with Captain Kidd, the buccaneer—the pirate?" asked the other.

"No, sir, I never thought of such a thing. I have heard you were a daring buccaneer, of the English, during the last war with France, before you became a—regular pirate. But of your previous history, I was not informed."

"Well, my lad, the truth is, I am really the William Kidd, who was once an honest merchant of New York, and I am the man whose life your father saved. It was a brave deed, and I have always been grateful, the more so because I had no claim upon your father's friendship, at the time, for ours was only a business acquaintance. You resemble your father, Captain Marlin, wonderfully. As soon as I learned your name, I thought you were my preserver's son. Later, I heard the captain of the Queen say so. Now, my lad, pirate though I am, I have saved you, in order to, in a measure at least, discharge the great debt of gratitude which I owe your sire, as well as to gain in you a valuable recruit."

"I will make your fortune. You shall share the gold, with which the richly laden galleons from the Spanish main are loaded, and which I frequently capture. I will yet make you captain of one of my ships, and you can make a palace home for the girl who will be your bride, on the island of Tortuga, where the buccaneers rule, and where they have built a town."

"You have taken the pirate's oath, and you are bound to me. When your conduct among the buccaneers has proven your fealty, and you have won the confidence of the men, your advancement shall begin."

"We are now bound for an island, which I discovered, and took possession of a year ago. It is really the island of which

Deadlight told. There I shall fit out an expedition to ravage the coast of the West Indies and Panama."

Again the pirate captain paused and looked at Jack with keen and searching glances, seeking evidently to determine what impression his remarks had made upon the mind of the youth.

Jack knew he had a desperate part to play for his own life as well as that of the innocent young girl whom he loved, and whom a cruel destiny had placed with him in the power of the pirates.

He was convinced that he could only hope to gain an opportunity to escape with Bertha, by gaining the confidence of the pirate chief and his men to such an extent that they would not entertain the slightest suspicion that he meant to desert them.

Though he was essentially frank and open in his nature, the vital necessity for subterfuge and deception seemed to inspire him with an ability for deceit, which under the circumstances it would have been impossible for him to command.

He looked Kidd in the face unflinchingly, as he replied:

"I have cast in my lot with you. I have my fortune to make. You will not find me wanting when I have a chance to prove my fealty."

"Good! That is well spoken, lad. But I shall have a pledge—a hostage for your conduct and return, when you sail away from my island upon your first pirate venture," rejoined Kidd, with a cunning and triumphant smile.

Jack felt a thrill of alarm, and he thought of Bertha.

He was about to ask the pirate to speak more plainly, but just then there came a rap at the cabin door.

Kidd threw the portal open at once, and Bonnet, the ruffianly lieutenant of the pirate chief, appeared.

Seeing Jack, the evil-looking rascal frowned at him fiercely, and the look he gave him assured the youth that he was jealous of the favor and confidence which Kidd showed him.

"What is it, Bonnet?" demanded Kidd.

"The island is in sight, sir."

"Very well. We will make the harbor at once. I suppose there is no strange sail in sight, or I should have been informed of it."

"No, sir. The sea is clear. Our two ships, besides the Rover, are in the harbor. This captured brig makes our fleet one of four vessels. The men are growing impatient because of your long absence, and they are eager to take to the sea in search of prizes."

"They shall not have long to wait," answered Kidd.

Then, with Bonnet, he strode from the cabin, and Jack followed the two pirates on deck.

Looking to the southward, he saw a small, wooded island outlined upon the sea. He paced the deck, thinking with awe and wonder what destiny might have in store for him.

At last the Rover and the Queen entered a land-locked harbor on the northern coast of the island.

Floating at anchor, Jack saw a fine, large ship, upon the bow of which was painted the name the Quedagh Merchant.

Beside this vessel was a rakish schooner, much like the Rover. There was a rude dock on the shore. Beyond this he saw a village of cabins. The decks of the vessels in the harbor were occupied by but few men. But upon the dock Jack saw a motley crowd of ruffianly-looking men.

As the captured brig and the pirate schooner entered the harbor, the pirates on the two vessels already there, and those upon the dock set up a cheer of welcome, and a salute of several guns was fired by the anchored vessels.

Captain Kidd waved his hat, and his men on the Queen and aboard the Rover answered the cheers of their comrades.

The two vessels were soon anchored in the harbor, and boats were lowered.

"Bring the lady and get into my boat. On the shore Miss Clayton shall have quarters with the wife of one of my officers, and accommodations shall be found for you in the same cabin," said Captain Kidd, presently.

A little later Jack and Bertha landed with Captain Kidd upon the dock. Then ensued every possible demonstration of joy on the part of the buccaneers over the return of their chief.

Jack and Bertha were conducted to a cabin in the little village which the pirates had built, and they were presented to a handsome, matronly woman and her husband, one of Kidd's officers.

To the care of the pirate's wife Kidd commended Bertha and Jack. They were well received, and having seen Bertha's comfort and present needs as well provided for as circumstances would permit, Jack left the cabin.

He was left entirely free and unwatched, it seemed, for, of course, there was no possibility of his escaping from the island; then Jack sauntered about for some time. He had gone to the end of the pirates' settlement, some distance from the shore, when he heard shouts of revelry from a large cabin, which he had almost reached. A moment later, as he was about to retrace his steps, Bonnet, the brutal pirate officer, who seemed to have set his heart upon possessing Bertha, came swaggering out of the cabin, followed by a dozen ruffianly fellows who were his companions. The whole party seemed much inflamed with drink, and the instant he espied Jack, Bonnet flashed out his sword and cried:

"Come, now, my young fire-brand, out with your hanger! You have got to fight me for the gal!"

As he spoke, Bonnet rushed at Jack. The lad wished to avoid a duel. But he saw he could not do so. He faced the fierce pirate and drew his sword. Bonnet's companions formed a ring about the lad and his antagonist. A moment and there came a clash of steel and the desperate duel began.

CHAPTER VII.

A DESPERATE COMBAT—THE BURIED TREASURE.

Bonnet was a skillful swordsman, and Jack's education had not been neglected in this regard. In those days men carried swords just as commonly as they now carry canes. And Jack's father, who was an expert swordsman, had made his son a master of the weapon.

The weapons with which Jack and the pirate fought were really that variety of sword commonly called a cutlass, which was generally used on shipboard. The weapon is shorter than the ordinary sword and less flexible.

Jack realized, as soon as the duel with Bonnet began, that he had encountered a man who was worthy of his steel—one indeed who was his equal, if not his superior in skill.

And there could be no doubt that the burly pirate was more powerful than his light and slender antagonist.

But it was soon evident that this disparity, in point of weight and strength in Bonnet's favor, was more than made up for by the superior quickness and agility which Jack exhibited.

The youth assumed merely the defensive at the outset.

The first blow which Bonnet aimed at Jack the lad neatly caught and parried.

Then he fell back a pace or two. The ground was barren—a mere extension of the sandy beach—and it afforded the duelists an excellent foothold.

As Jack backed away, Bonnet cried out, tauntingly:

"Stand, you dog! Stand and fight like a man! Here's at you again!"

He came at the lad in a furious assault of cut, thrust, and lunge. The sparks flew from the tempered steel. But at every

point at which the pirate aimed the youth seemed invulnerable.

Bonnet's blade did not touch him.

His own weapon, like an invincible guard of steel, was always in place to receive and turn the heavy blows of the pirate aside harmlessly.

Bonnet's companions, who knew his skill with the cutlass, had undoubtedly looked to see Jack cut down at once.

But expressions of surprise fell from their lips as they witnessed Jack's masterly defense and unbreakable guard.

As the contest proceeded, murmurs of admiration for the splendid work of the young recruit were uttered by the pirates.

"Look out, Bonnet, that he don't begin to press matters on his side!" cried one.

"You've got your match!"

"Ha! The lad has a wrist like steel, and he's quick as a cat."

These and other remarks nettled and angered Bonnet.

He seemed to grow reckless, and his attacks became furious and less scientific.

Jack's constant adherence to strictly defensive tactics had made Bonnet bold.

He must have recognized the lad's surprising skill in defense, however.

But he probably thought the lad was not an expert in the art of attack.

And Jack's manner rather tended to confirm the idea that the pirate had somewhat intimidated him.

Truth to say, this was just the impression which the lad wished the pirate to form.

And while Jack maintained the defensive, he had in view the object not only merely to protect himself from his antagonist's fierce assaults, but he was bent also upon learning Bonnet's tricks and methods.

Steadily Jack's confidence in himself increased.

Though he was naturally quite nervous and excited when the desperate combat began, he soon became cool and composed.

On the contrary, the continued success of the lad in foiling him at every point of his attack, constantly increased Bonnet's anger and excitement.

Jack began presently to shift about Bonnet. He was so light on his feet that, as he danced around, with his weapon constantly at a guard, the unwieldy pirate could scarcely keep a front to him.

Bonnet began to puff and blow. Jack laughed in his face, and said:

"Your bellows begin to need mending, you ruffian, but I think presently I'll fix you beyond repair. You are like a fat grampus. Who told you you could fight? Bah!"

Of course, Jack had a purpose in thus taunting Bonnet.

He hoped to so enrage the pirate that he would forget all caution.

His object was attained.

With horrible threats Bonnet rushed in at Jack, swinging his cutlass in regular "beat down" blows, as if he was engaged in a broadsword combat instead of a duel with cutlasses.

Jack braced his feet firmly in the sand and met this, the most desperate and reckless of all the pirate's assaults like a rock.

The steel blades clashed upon each other with such lightning-like rapidity that the blows could scarcely be counted.

But suddenly the point of Jack's weapon caught the basket hilt of Bonnet's cutlass. There came the sound of ripping steel and then a mad cry from the pirate, as his weapon was torn from his grasp and flung into the air from the point of Jack's blade.

A yell of applause went up from the ruffianly spectators. It was the rule of the pirates that no man should interfere when two of their band engaged in a duel.

Not a man among them moved as Bonnet stood unarmed at the mercy of the youth, whom he had sought with all his skill and murderous fury to slay.

It was a moment of well earned triumph for Jack.

Bonnet's legs shook. His swarthy face turned a grayish hue, and his blood-shot eyes showed in them the terror of death that had seized upon his guilty soul.

Jack had the point of his weapon at the throat of his trembling wretch, upon the instant.

One lunge, and the man who, while he lived, would be a constant menace to Bertha—whose brutal passions had led him to attempt to slay the maiden's champion—would be but a lump of inanimate clay.

But Jack hesitated. He knew he had the right, according to all the laws of mortal combat—the duel—to spare, or kill.

With him alone the decision of life, or death now rested. Bonnet he knew deserved death. But it seemed to Jack too awful a thing to take a life, now that he stood unarmed—at his mercy.

The pirate's lips moved, but evidently terror made him speechless.

"Down upon your knees!" thundered Jack.

Bonnet gave a despairing groan, and in a moment the swaggering, brutal bully, was groveling in the sand.

Still, none of the pirates spoke.

Not a single voice was raised to utter in Bonnet's behalf one appeal for mercy.

He was an overbearing and brutal wretch, even among his companions, and though fear of him caused them to conceal the sentiment, for the most part he was cordially hated.

"Now, then, your life is mine!" cried Jack, as Bonnet sank upon his knees. "But, though there is no doubt your many crimes deserve the punishment of death a hundred times, still I do not care to become your executioner. Swear the pirate's oath that you will never seek to come between me and the lady whom I claimed aboard the Queen—that you will never molest her, and I will give you your miserable life."

Bonnet's expression changed.

He hesitated, and then cried out:

"I swear it! I swear it!"

"Men, I call you all to bear witness to his oath. And now bear my vow. If Bonnet breaks this oath, I swear that I will kill him the first time we meet thereafter, or he shall kill me. Never again should it come to a combat between us, will I spare his life," said Jack in ringing tones.

A cheer went up from the pirates. Jack saw that he had made himself quite a hero in their eyes by defeating Bonnet.

"Now, get up and be off!" he said to the groveling wretch.

He arose, walked where his cutlass lay, and having picked up the weapon, he slunk away. But before he disappeared among the cabins of the settlement he glanced back at Jack with such a look of murderous hate that for a moment the lad half regretted he had spared his worthless life.

"Take care, mate; Bonnet is a fiend for revenge. He won't keep his oath. Look out that he don't cut your throat some night while you sleep," said one of the pirates.

"I shall be on my guard," answered Jack, and then he walked away by himself and sat down under a cocoanut tree to rest.

He was quite weary with the violent exercise of the combat with Bonnet. Anon he saw Captain Kidd and a squad of men, armed with picks and shovels, approaching.

As they came up, Kidd, seeing Jack, cried out:

"Hello, my lad, are you keeping guard over Deadlight's buried treasure?"

The youth started up. Kidd came to his side and showed him the old sailor's rude map of the island.

Jack then saw that the cocoanut tree, under which he had chanced to seat himself, was evidently the very tree drawn on the map, under which the gold from the ship, the Caroline, had been buried according to Deadlight.

Kidd said he had taken the map from the dead body of Deadlight aboard the Queen.

And he added that he meant now to dig for the treasure.

Under his directions the men, who accompanied him, set to work directly.

They plied their picks and shovels with a will, and in a short time a number of bags of gold bullion and coin was unearthed.

The pirates continued to dig until they were satisfied they had unearthed all the buried treasure. Then, laden with the spoil, they went back to the private settlement, and Jack accompanied them.

CHAPTER VIII.

A NIGHT OF REVELRY—KIDD'S PLANS TO SEPARATE THE LOVERS.

That evening Kidd divided the gold which had been unearthed upon the island, according to the rules of the pirates, and among the others Jack was compelled to accept his share.

The pirate captain insisted upon this, in a manner which showed that he fancied the acceptance of a share of the plunder from the cache, by his young recruit, would further bind Jack to the band, and incriminate him with his compulsory associates.

The ruffians were greatly elated over securing the riches, which had originally come from the ill-fated ship the Caroline.

And in order to celebrate the event to the liking of his men, Kidd caused a pipe of wine to be placed upon the shore before the village of the buccaneers.

The head was taken out, and the wild community drank of it as freely as they pleased. In fact, the pirates partook of the wine as if it was water.

Drunken ruffians reeled about, oaths filled the air, and knives gleamed, and pistols were discharged.

There were fights, wounds were given, all was disorder.

The pirates' shouts of revelry fell discordantly upon Jack's ears like the revelry of demons.

Of course the young recruit did not enter their brutal carousals. Nothing could have induced him to become hail fellow with these vulgar, degraded and profane wretches, whom he despised.

At an early hour Jack repaired to the cabin in which Bertha had been placed. He found the young girl alone with the wife of the pirate who dwelt there.

The shouts of the drunken revelers on the shore, and the occasional report of a weapon fired by the wretches in the air, or perhaps at some comrade who had given offense, could be heard in the cabin.

Bertha was in terror, but she greeted Jack joyfully and seemed to find a sense of security in his presence. The pirate's wife presently left the young lovers alone while she went out boldly, avowing her intention of bringing her husband home.

Then Jack told Bertha of his duel with Bonnet, and of the oath which he compelled the ruffian to take.

"Let us now hope that the wretch will trouble us no more," he said in conclusion.

"I cannot hope, for I do not believe Bonnet will keep his oath. Oh, Jack, what a terrible place this is! I am in deadly fear. Bad as they are when sober, how much more the pirates are to be feared when maddened by drink," said Bertha, in alarmed tones.

"You need not fear them. I will guard you during the night, and no harm shall come to you," replied the youth, stoutly.

Then he spoke of the buried gold, which the pirates had unearthed, and presently the conversation turned upon plans for escape.

The young couple talked in whispers, for they knew not but some eavesdropper might be lurking about the cabin.

"Kidd evidently means soon to sail from this island with his fleet, bent upon a piratical cruise, and you and I must sail with him. This is our only hope. During the cruise we may get a chance to desert, when near some friendly port, and then, too, the pirates may fall in with some warships, which may capture them," said Jack.

His words and manner were hopeful. But truth to say he was not as confident of escape as he tried to seem.

But he wanted to cheer and sustain the courage of his girlish companion.

Jack and Bertha were still conversing in low tones, when they were startled by hearing a heavy rap on the door.

Bertha was seated, but she sprang up with an alarmed exclamation.

"Be calm. You are safe with me," assured Jack, and with his hand upon the hilt of his cutlass, he went to the door and opened it.

Captain Kidd appeared upon the threshold, and the lad saw at a glance that the pirate chief was entirely sober.

He entered and greeted Bertha with respectful bow.

"My lad," he said, directly, "I have just heard how you defeated Bonnet in a duel to-day. I congratulate you. You are a hero in the eyes of the men. You could have done nothing that would have so quickly established yourself in their good graces. I am well pleased with you. Between ourselves, Bonnet is a rascal whom I do not always trust, and I should not have been angered if you had slain him. He is ambitious, and I suspect he only wants a chance to induce him to conspire to depose me."

"I was compelled to fight him. I have spared his life once, but as I have already told him and the men, I shall never do so again," replied Jack.

"Very good. But now I wish to tell you that I shall sail for the West Indies and the Spanish Main, the coast of Mexico, in three days' time."

"And, of course, I shall sail with you and the lady will accompany me," answered Jack, eagerly.

Kidd evidently noted his eagerness, and he smiled in his peculiar and cunning way, a he rejoined:

"Yes, *you* will sail with me. In regard to the lady, I shall have something to say later."

Jack and Bertha exchanged alarmed and meaning glances.

The young girl's face paled. She was seized with the dreadful apprehension that the pirate chief meant to separate her and Jack.

The lad experienced the same fear.

Kidd went on to say, quickly:

"Your conduct has so pleased me, and has so gained the confidence—not to say respect and fear of the men—that I have decided to promote you at once. I have told the men that you understand the art of navigation, and it is already decided that you shall sail as first mate on my own ship the Quedagh Merchant. We have supplies for the voyage aboard, and the only real work to be done before we sail is to place some twenty cannon aboard the captured Queen, and otherwise fit her out as a privateer."

"I thank you for what you have done for me. But now tell me at once what you have in mind regarding Miss Clayton? You gave her to me. It is my wish that she should sail with me. I cannot leave her behind. Think what perils might menace her during my absence from the island. But of course you will allow her to go with me to sea?" said Jack.

"Bonnet will sail with me, and so the lady will have nothing

to fear here. She must remain here with my officer's wife. Only a few trusty men will be left upon the island. I tell you the lady will be safe."

"Oh, sir, do not say that! Do not separate us!" implored Bertha.

"I could not allow you to sail with the youth, even if I were disposed to do so," answered Kidd, firmly.

"And why not? Tell me that, for surely your will is law. You are virtually the king of the pirates, and yours is the only authority they respect!" cried Jack.

"You forget one thing, my lad."

"What is that? I do not understand you?"

"It is that we are governed by laws, which I, as well as the humblest member of my crews, must live up to. I cannot make or unmake those laws. All must have an equal voice in making them. And it is one of our most rigid rules, that no man is allowed to take a woman with him on shipboard, when he sails on a cruise for prizes."

"But our separation will be a terrible trial to us both. Is there no way in which, in this instance, the rule of your band may be overlooked somewhat in our behalf?" asked Jack, desperately.

"It will break my heart if I am left alone here with the pirates. And then Jack may never come back," wailed the maiden, in heartbroken tones.

"It is useless to say more upon this matter. To be frank with you, lad, I will say I would not allow the lady to sail with you, if I could. I gave you a hint of my plan, regarding her once before. In order to make myself positively sure of your good conduct on our cruise, and that you will return to the island when we come back, I mean the lady shall be held here. She shall be a hostage to bind you to my service."

"Then, you at heart distrust me?"

"No. Not that exactly, lad, but you are not a voluntary recruit," said Kidd, meaningly.

And then, as if to avoid further discussion, he hastily left the cabin.

When the door closed behind him Bertha burst into tears.

Jack put his arms about her, and tried to soothe her bitter grief and despair.

"Do not give way thus, my dear one. Do not think, for a moment, that I will abandon you—leave you here alone with the pirates—for I will not do so. No, I will not do it, not though a thousand Captain Kidds commanded it. We will, we must find some means to baffle this plan to separate us. We have three days in which to think and plan," he said, encouragingly.

CHAPTER IX.

A SECRET VISITOR—THE PIRATES CAPTURE A MERCHANTMAN.

When, after a time, Jack had succeeded in quieting Bertha's outburst of grief and despair somewhat, they fell to discussing ways and means to outwit the pirate chief, and yet remain together.

But, although they both racked their minds for some feasible idea, which might enable them to accomplish their wishes, they found it impossible to hit upon any plan.

At first Jack proposed that, on the eve of the day, before the one set for the sailing of the pirate fleet, he should desert the pirates, and conceal himself somewhere in the woods, inland.

But this plan was decided against, when Jack stated, as he thought of it, that he had already learned the island was of small extent, and only sparsely wooded, and that evidently the pirates would easily hunt down and capture him.

"No, you must not think of hiding on the island. Your capture would mean your death. And beside, you would not dare

to come to the pirate village, so you could not protect me," said Bertha.

"We cannot think of putting to sea in midocean in an open boat, even if, as is by no means certain, we could succeed in getting off undetected," he said ruefully.

"No, and so it seems there is no way," she answered, in hopeless tones.

"Yes, there is one way. But it is terribly dangerous, for if we are discovered the pirates will no doubt compel us both to walk the plank."

"How do you mean, Jack? Tell me! Tell me! Oh, I am ready to take any risk of which you approve! I am only a weak girl, but you shall not find me a coward."

"It seems the only way in which we can avoid being separated, and possibly gain a chance to ultimately make our escape from the pirates, is for you to sail with me secretly—without Kidd's knowledge."

"Yes! Yes! You are right. I am ready to attempt that," cried Bertha.

"But the danger that you may be found out deters me. I fear that you could not long remain a hidden stowaway aboard the pirate ship undiscovered. Oh, that there was some other way," said Jack.

Bertha was about to reply when she gave a sudden start, and grasping Jack's arm, said in an apprehensive whisper:

"What was that? I thought I heard a sound at yonder window. Oh, if someone has overheard us, we are indeed lost."

"Be silent and brave," replied Jack.

Then he glided to the window. As he reached it the face of a man appeared above the sill.

The youth instantly recognized him. He was a sailor called White, who had been one of the original crew of the Queen.

"Are you alone, shipmate?" asked the sailor, in low and cautious tones.

"No. Miss Clayton is here," replied Jack, indicating the shrinking girl, who stood in the shadows which half veiled the room, because there was no lamp in it, though the bright moonlight from without came in at the windows.

"Well, shipmate, since I know you do not want to become a pirate, I've come to tell you that me an' Lance, another one o' the crew o' the Queen what jined the pirates merely to save our own lives, would like to help you in any plan to get away from the wretches."

Jack remembered that this man, and the one named Lance had always seemed quiet and willing hands when they were aboard the Queen.

And the recollection also came to him that they had at first refused to join Deadlight and the mutineers, and that it had taken those who were in favor of the mutiny some time to talk them over.

"I want you to know," White went on, earnestly, "that Lance and I didn't want to take any part in seizin' the Queen. But the crew drove us to it. We would have fared like the captain and Mate Hanson if we had stood out agin Deadlight and the others."

"I believe you, White; and, if the chance ever comes, I shall be glad to have you and Lance aid me. It is my greatest desire to escape with the lady," said Jack.

"Kidd has assigned Lance an' me to the crew of his own ship. He said you would sail on her, so we shall all three be together on the pirate craft at sea very soon."

"Good! I am glad to hear that. I may call upon you and Lance to help me in a certain matter. But in the meantime I want you and your shipmate to appear to be unfriendly to me, so the pirates may not think we have any secret understanding. At sea some chance may come which we can take advantage of to give the sea robbers the slip," responded Jack.

He and White exchanged a few further remarks, and then the latter retreated from the window.

Jack watched him out of sight among the adjacent cabins.

The youth saw none of the pirates about, so he was assured that White's clandestine visit had not been noted by any of them.

The ruffians of the island were too much taken up with the drunken revelry which was in progress on the shore to pay attention to anything else.

When White had disappeared Jack retired from the window.

Bertha had overheard the whispered words of the youth and the man of the old crew of the Queen.

She was inclined to look upon the statement of White as a good omen, and Jack agreed with her.

Anon, the pirate's wife returned to the cabin alone. The poor woman had not been able to induce her husband to leave the revelers on the shore.

The cabin was divided into four rooms, with a hall between them. One of the rear apartments had been assigned to Bertha, and the opposite one had been given to Jack. Soon after the return of the pirate's wife, Jack and Bertha retired to their several rooms. But soon Jack placed himself on guard before the door of the young girl's chamber, and there he remained until the dawn undisturbed.

On the following day the pirates began active preparations for sailing, and toward night a sail was sighted to the southwest of the island. At once Captain Kidd called the crew of his own particular vessel aboard, and accompanied by the schooner called the Rover he sailed out of the harbor, intending to capture the distant ship.

Jack was ordered aboard the ship of the pirate captain, and he took leave of Bertha. Soon he reached the deck of the pirate. About three hours later the two pirate vessels bore down on the doomed ship, which had been sighted from the island, and which had crowded on all said and vainly tried to escape them.

A cannon ball fired across the deck of the fleeing vessel from Captain Kidd's ship, caused the former to lay to.

The vessel was a large ship, and it flew the Portuguese flag. At a glance, the pirates saw it was a merchantman, and but poorly equipped for defense. The pirates lowered away their boats, and soon boarded the merchantman. The crew, thinking they might thus save their own lives, offered no resistance. In a short time the pirates were in complete possession of the valuable prize. The crew was first driven below and fastened in the hold. Then a number of pirates were left on the prize to bring her to the island. The two pirate vessels conveyed the merchantman.

A little after midnight the pirates re-entered the island harbor with their prize. There was great rejoicing over their good luck among the buccaneers when they found the merchantman was richly laden. The crew of the unfortunate vessel was given a chance to join the pirates or walk the plank. Most of them chose the former fate. But the captain and his officers stoutly refused to swear allegiance to Captain Kidd. Then Jack was compelled to witness a scene of heartless cruelty. With their arms bound, the captain and officers of the captured ship were made to walk blindfolded the awful plank, until they were jostled into the sea by the brutal assassin.

The second day after that the pirate fleet was ready to sail for the Spanish Main, and Captain Kidd came to Jack, and said:

"There are several lads among the people captured on the merchantman, I believe. I wish you would go among them and pick out a likely lad to serve as cabin boy on my ship. Bring him with you when you come aboard."

Jack assented, and his heart leaped with excitement as, al-

most upon the instant, he formed the desperate resolve to take Bertha aboard Kidd's ship, disguised as a boy.

"Yes," he said to himself, "Bertha shall sail as cabin boy aboard Captain Kidd's ship. God grant he may not find her out!"

CHAPTER X.

BERTHA ABOARD CAPTAIN KIDD'S SHIP DISGUISED AS A BOY.

It seemed to Jack that at last fate had favored his desire to take Bertha with him aboard the pirate ship, on the cruise of the buccaneers to the West Indies, and the Spanish Main.

As soon as he could do so without calling the attention of Kidd or his men to his movements, Jack sought Bertha at the cabin of the pirate officer.

He found the fair captive alone.

In a few moments he had informed her of the desperate, and dangerous plan which he had formed.

And he did not seek to conceal from her the peril which menaced the daring undertaking.

"I comprehend all the danger that may arise, and I am willing to take the risk. I think the very necessity of such fateful importance which impels me, will inspire me so that I shall be able to assume well the part of a boy aboard Captain Kidd's ship," said Bertha, when Jack had told her his plan.

"Then the first thing is to secure your disguise, and to take every possible precaution to guard against your detection. You must not be missed from this cabin until the pirate fleet is too far from the island to be informed of the fact. But the woman who dwells with you, and who is virtually your guard has sharp eyes, and she is shrewd and watchful. The important question at the outset is, can we deceive her?"

"Jack, the pirate's wife is a kindly woman, and I have learned that, at heart, she is not in sympathy with her husband's evil way of life. She feels for me, I know, and I am almost sure she would help us," answered Bertha.

"But we cannot be sure of her assistant. Bertha, I dare not trust her."

"I respect your judgment too much to advise you to take the risk."

"We must now agree upon every minute detail of our plan. Let us consider everything," he said.

They conversed for some moments longer, and when, at length, they thought they had, as far as it was possible for them to do, provided for every contingency that might arise, Jack left the cabin.

But before he withdrew he assured Bertha that he meant soon to return with the boy's clothing which she was to assume.

After leaving the cabin, Jack went among the people from the captured ship, who had assumed to join Kidd's forces. They were quartered by themselves in several rude cabins which had been erected for storehouses, but which chanced to be empty at the time of the seizure of the Portuguese merchantman.

The personal belongings of these unfortunate ones had been landed and given to them. Among the new arrivals Jack saw two lads about sixteen years of age each. One of them was a light-haired, pink and white faced, girlish-looking lad, who might have passed for an English youth instead of a Portuguese. The other was slender and very dark, with dark hair, but strange to say, his eyes were blue, like Bertha's.

The name of the first mentioned youth was Palva, and the second was called Diego.

At first Jack was inclined, because of his English appearance, to decide that it would be best for Bertha to try to impersonate Palva. But then it flashed upon him that the young girl could disguise her face more effectually as Diego.

As both lads were entire strangers to the pirates, and Cap-

tain Kidd had probably not observed either one of the Portuguese youths closely, it can be seen the plan which Jack had formed was not without some promise of success.

A little reflection decided him that Bertha should impersonate the dark youth called Diego.

Then he spied about until he got a chance to secure a suit of Diego's clothing from a box which he saw the boy, whom he closely watched, open.

He had already been informed by Kidd that none of the crew of the captured Portuguese craft was to sail with the pirate fleet, and so he had no fear that Bertha would be betrayed on shipboard by any of those men.

Taking the suit of boy's clothes with him, concealed in a bundle covered with an old piece of sailcloth, Jack made his way back to Bertha's cabin.

As he entered it he saw the young girl and the wife of the pirate officer seated side by side and conversing in an evidently confidential manner.

Bertha sprang up as Jack appeared, and turned to him a joyous face all aglow with animation, as if some new hope had imparted a radiance of its own to her fair countenance.

"She knows all!" exclaimed Bertha, as she indicated the pirate's wife.

Jack recoiled thunderstruck, and his face must have betrayed the chagrin and consternation which he felt, for the pirate's wife hastened to say reassuringly:

"You have nothing to fear from me. I was in the adjoining room when you were here last and I overheard all. I feel for you both deeply, and I have told Bertha she can rely on me to help her as far as I can do so with safety. That is, without the knowledge of my husband or the others here."

The woman seemed to be sincere.

Jack was obliged to take her at her word, and he thanked her cordially.

"There is no time to lose," he hastened to say. "I have here a suit of clothing for Bertha. It belongs to the lad she must impersonate. He is about her size. His face is very dark. He has black hair, and oddly enough, blue eyes. I should say, too, he has his hair cut short, and that fortunately he speaks English well."

"My hair must be cut and dyed, and my skin stained dark!" exclaimed Bertha.

"That can be easily done. I have hair dye which I use myself, and a tea made from a plant that grows on the island of which I have gathered a quantity, because it has medicinal properties which will serve to stain your skin dark. Come with me, I will help you make your disguise. My husband is busy on shipboard. We need not fear he will come to interrupt us," said the pirate's wife, and she seemed to find pleasure in forwarding the romantic enterprise of the imperilled lovers.

Jack handed her the bundle, and with Bertha she retired to an inner room.

The youth went to a window and watched.

He meant to give warning if he saw any one approaching the cabin. But no one came there and in half an hour's time, Bertha and the pirate's wife reappeared.

Jack uttered an exclamation of surprise and gratification as he saw the maiden.

She was completely transformed.

And he confessed to himself he would not have known her had he not been informed in advance that she meant to assume the disguise of a boy.

Her hair had been cut close and dyed black. Her fair skin had been stained to the very dark hue of the Portuguese youth whom she meant to personate when she was afloat with Captain Kidd.

In her natty sailor boy's suit and jaunty cap, Bertha looked a very handsome sailor lad.

"Bravo! This is a wonderful transformation! I would not have believed it possible for you to so completely conceal your own identity. Bertha, I am now more hopeful than ever, and do not think you will be found out, unless some unforeseen accident should occur to betray you," said Jack, in delight.

"Now, I will leave the cabin, for it's time we should go aboard Kidd's ship. When I am gone, do you slip out by the rear door, when you are sure no one can see you. Then hasten to join me on the dock. I will wait for you there," he added.

Then he thanked the pirate's wife fervently for all the valuable assistance she had rendered, and with another word or two of caution addressed to Bertha, he left the cabin.

Jack went directly to the dock. As he proceeded, he glanced back anxious from time to time. He had but just arrived at the dock, where a boat lay waiting to take him off to Kidd's ship, when he saw Bertha coming.

She soon joined him, and she said:

"I am sure no one saw me leave the cabin, and that, thus far, everything has gone well with our plan."

With Bertha Jack entered the waiting boat.

The pirates who manned her saluted the youth respectfully, for all knew he had been appointed chief mate of Kidd's own vessel.

At the word of command from Jack the boat's crew bent to their oars lustily, and the small craft went dancing swiftly over the quiet waters of the island harbor.

The ship of the pirate chief was soon reached, and, as the boat came alongside, Jack saw that the name, the *Quedagh Merchant*, had been effaced, and in its stead the name, the *Scorpion*, had been painted on her side.

Jack and Bertha boarded the ship at once.

And, as the former, who preceded the disguised girl, set foot upon the pirate's deck, the first man he faced was Bonnet, the brutal officer of the buccaneers, whom he had the most reason to dread might penetrate the secret of the maid whom he coveted.

This was a surprise to Jack. He knew that Bonnet usually commanded one of the ships of Kidd's fleet. He earnestly hoped Bonnet was only aboard Kidd's vessel transiently—that he would go aboard one of the other ships before the fleet sailed.

Bonnet turned away as Jack alighted upon the deck and Bertha came over the side. A moment and Jack saw Bonnet meet Captain Kidd amidship. The two came toward Jack and Bertha. The disguised girl stood at Jack's side.

"Courage!" he whispered.

"Ha! So you have brought me a cabin boy, and a likely youngster he looks to be. What's your name, lad?" said Kidd, eyeing Bertha approvingly.

"Diego, sir," she answered, doffing her cap.

"Very good. I see you speak English well. Go forward and ask for Mr. Bramble, the steward. He'll tell you what your duties are," the pirate chief rejoined.

Bertha bowed and walked away. Jack noted Bonnet followed her with his eyes.

CHAPTER XI.

BONNET ABOARD KIDD'S SHIP WITH JACK AND BERTHA.

As Bertha withdrew, Captain Kidd again addressed Jack.

"My lad, I want once more to call your attention to the fact that no man of my crew is allowed to strike another on shipboard. Bonnet will sail on my ship as second mate. I warn you both, there must be no trouble between you aboard ship. You must forget your quarrel until we return to the island," the pirate chief said.

Jack bowed and replied:

"I shall obey your orders, sir."

Bonnet glared at the lad. His look was one of mortal

hatred. Jack suspected he was savagely jealous of his advancement to the post of first mate.

Bonnet made no reply to Kidd. With a salute, he turned away, and Kidd said as soon as the ruffian had crossed the deck:

"I got a warning from some unknown man of my band by letter that Bonnet was likely to seize my schooner, the *Rover*, and make off with her in the night to cruise independently of me, if he was allowed to go in command of the black schooner on this voyage; so I have decided to keep him on my own ship, where he will be under my eyes. He is furious at being reduced from captain of the schooner to my second officer. I think he would like to cut my throat as well as yours."

Jack deeply regretted this turn of affairs.

With Bonnet aboard the ship, he knew he had a bitter enemy near.

And he was sure the ruffian would watch him, and that the danger of his discovering the secret of the pretended cabin boy would be a constant menace to the disguised maiden.

Jack had not as yet taken White or Lance, the two men of the crew of the Queen into the secret of Bertha's presence on the pirate ship.

He acted on the belief that the more persons who share a secret, the less safe it is. Until he saw some actual necessity for informing White and Lance of the young girl's disguise, he meant to keep them in ignorance regarding it.

The Portuguese ship which they had so recently captured, the pirates judged unfit for service as a pirate craft until she could be provided with cannon, which they did not then have on the island, and so she was left in horror there when the fleet sailed.

Not long after Jack and Bertha boarded Kidd's ship she weighed anchor, and favored by wind and tide sailed out of the harbor.

The schooner called the *Rover* came next, and the Queen and the other ship of the fleet followed in the order given.

The combined crews of the four vessels made a force of about three hundred men. The course they took was southwest. Kidd was in high spirits. Jack was placed in charge of the deck, but Kidd paced up and down upon it, until the island was lost to sight upon the northern horizon.

Anon the pirate chief joined Jack.

"My lad, said he, exultantly, "I now find myself in a fair way to carry out a plan which I have long had in mind, and which I believe will make us all as rich as princes. With my present force I feel that I am strong enough not only to attack any merchant fleet we may meet, and give battle to a war cruiser, if necessary, but also to land, and capture and plunder the rich towns on the coast of the West Indies and Mexico and Panama. The latter undertaking is one of the main objects of this voyage."

Jack listened to this eagerly. In the pirate's plan for making forays on shore he saw there was a chance for him and Bertha. Once they landed with the pirates, they might be able to slip away from them and reach some coast town.

Even among the Spaniards, he thought he and the young girl were likely to be received kindly when he had made their story known.

"Men call me a pirate, and such I have become. But if I am ever taken, I have the commission of our English king, William III., to protect me. It is the regular commission of a privateer," continued Kidd.

This was quite true, and in order to learn how Kidd came by the king's commission, and to the better understanding of what is to follow, let us refer briefly to the origin of the old buccaneers and the condition of affairs in the Spanish possessions and English colonies of the new world.

After the discovery of the new continent, the Pope issued a

proclamation dividing the newly discovered lands in the West Indies, Mexico, and Panama, between Spain and Portugal.

England, France and the Netherlands then combined against Spain and Portugal. Their courts would give a commission to any man to take a ship, fill it with armed men, and prey upon the commerce of Spain and Portugal. There was no court to decide upon the validity of prizes. The captors were not responsible to anybody. They decided for themselves whether the prize they had taken was their legitimate booty. The whole spoil was divided among them according to their own agreement.

Very soon the sea swarmed with these adventurers. They did not confine themselves to preying upon the ships of Spain and Portugal, but seized vessels of all nations, and made the crews walk the plank, that no man might tell the tale. They claimed not to be pirates, but called themselves 'buccaneers,' and they swaggered through the streets of England, France and Netherlands, with lavish hands scattering their ill-gotten gold.

Captain Kidd had obtained his commission from the king, like other buccaneers. But, on the wide ocean, he became a real pirate, and plundered every ship that came in his way. English ships, owned by his own countrymen were seized by him, and also ships of France. The news of his piratical doings had reached England, and long since he had been proclaimed a pirate, and we have seen that a price had been set upon his head. Yet his words to Jack showed he still regarded the king's commission as of great value to him, in the way of defense, if he was ever brought to trial.

During the last year, previous to the date when Jack Marlin and his sweetheart were afloat with Captain Kidd, the buccaneers had so increased in the West Indies, and all along the American coast, that they defiantly sailed under their own black flag. They penetrated rivers, landed in numbers sufficient to capture cities, robbing palaces and cathedrals, and extorting enormous ransom. They possessed themselves of island retreats where they lived in fabulous splendor. Piratical expeditions were filled out from the colonies of New England and Virginia. These successful pirates made their homes in the Carolinas, in Rhode Island and Long Island, being so audacious that they sought little concealment."

But to return to Jack and the fleet of Captain Kidd.

The vessel on which the youth sailed from the island had been captured by Kidd some time previously. And that was why he had her old name obliterated and the new one—The Scorpion—painted on her side.

She was a ship of four hundred tons and mounted thirty-six guns, and carried a crew of one hundred men.

On the evening of the first day out from the island of the pirates, Jack found a chance to exchange a few words with Bertha.

She told him that no one seemed to suspect her secret, that her duties were light, and that she was well treated.

"We must not be seen talking together. We must never forget the part you are playing, and always conduct ourselves toward each other as if you were really merely the cabin boy you seem," said Jack.

They were standing in the shadows at the foot of the companion stairs.

As Jack spoke he heard a faint sound. It was like the heavy breathing of a man, and it came from along the passage beyond them, where it was quite dark.

"Listen," whispered Jack, warningly.

At the same moment the door of Kidd's cabin at a distance of a few paces opened, and the pirate chief appeared. The light from his cabin streamed into the passage, and it revealed to the alarmed livers the crouching form of Bonnet, as he glided away beyond the portal of the captain's quarters.

Jack had hastily placed himself before Bertha. He saw Kidd did not catch sight of her. Bonnet glided into his own cabin unnoticed by the pirate chief. He saw Jack, and asked him some casual question as to the speed the ship was making. Then he retired into his cabin.

Trembling from head to foot, Bertha whispered to Jack:

"If Bonnet overheard us he has learned our secret. He will betray it to Kidd, and our doom will be death."

CHAPTER XII.

A SECRET FOE—JACK HURLED OVERBOARD.

"I hardly think Bonnet could have overheard our whispered words. I believe he did not get near enough to us to do so. But probably some suspicions have been awakened in his mind. Let us separate now. Bonnet's conduct will soon tell us whether his eavesdropping came to anything positive or not," said Jack.

"But if he has found us out?"

"I will watch him. Before I will allow him to betray us to the pirate chief I will shoot him down, let the consequences to me be what they may."

"Take care, Jack, for my sake," whispered Bertha, and then with a parting pressure of the hand she left the young sailor. Bertha ascended to the deck.

Jack remained at the foot of the companion stairs.

In a moment he heard sounds from Kidd's cabin, which led him to think the pirate was coming out.

Then Jack glided up the stairs.

He reached the deck, and he was standing by the rail looking out upon the sea, where the night shadows were descending, when Captain Kidd came upon the deck.

The pirate chief produced his glass and scanned the ocean in every direction in the fading light.

Then he came to Jack and said:

"I see only the three ships of my own fleet, and all are sailing well."

Jack responded with some casual remark.

Then Kidd walked away, and presently the lad saw Bonnet come upon deck and join the pirate captain.

The two men talked. Jack watched them covertly. And he experienced the most painful suspense, as the fear that Bonnet was making known suspicions in regard to Bertha and himself, which would imperil the maiden as well as himself, came to him.

But it seemed his fears had no ground of truth to rest upon, for presently Kidd and Bonnet separated, and Jack saw there was no change in the face of the pirate chief to indicate that he had heard disturbing news.

On the contrary, Kidd looked calm and perfectly at ease.

Anon, he joined Jack whose watch was on, and most pleasantly directed him to keep a sharp lookout under the moonlight, which would soon come, for any sail that might appear.

"We are liable to sight a Spanish galleon at any time now, my lad, for we are in the pathway of those rich ships in their homeward way," he said, in conclusion.

Jack drew a deep breath of relief.

The youth decided that everything seemed to indicate that Bonnet could not have overheard anything of his whispered conversation with Bertha.

The night advanced.

Anon, the moon came out, and later on, as Jack sauntered near the forecastle hatch, he saw a small shadowy figure beside it.

"Bertha," he whispered.

"Yes, I am here; my fears made me restless. I could not sleep. Oh, Jack, tell me have you seen or learned anything to

(Continued on page 20.)

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BRIEF, BUT POINTED.

According to a Belgian officer, who has just returned from the Congo Free State, the River Uelle there is full of a species of octopus, called by the natives "miga." This creature is in the habit, it is said, of attacking native canoes, capsizing them, dragging its victims to its case and making a meal of them. The Belgian tells some strange stories of the performances of these creatures which he professes to have witnessed.

One of the attractions of a fair held at Avoca, Ind., was a hypnotic entertainment. The hypnotist attempted the feat of burying a hypnotized subject for a period of twenty-four hours, and at the end of that time digging him up alive and well. As in all other such cases, a pipe was run from the surface of the ground to the buried person, that he might secure air. The burial had taken place and the subject had been under ground for some time, when it was discovered that a water barrel had overturned, or had burst, and that the water had run into the grave. When the discovery was made there were several inches of water around the subject, and it was only by desperate digging that he was rescued in time to prevent drowning.

A novel method of defrauding a jeweler was successfully carried out by a Paris thief. He drove up in a carriage to the jeweler's shop with his right arm in a sling, and was ostentatiously attended by a footman carrying a rug. He selected jewels to the value of \$1,000, and when the moment came for payment, asked whether the jeweler minded him sending his man home for the money. No objection was taken to this course, and then there was another request. "Would you mind writing for me," asked the customer. "I have hurt my arm. Just write, 'Please give Robert \$1,000,' and sign it 'Henri.'" The jeweler wrote the note and in fifteen minutes Robert was back with the cash. When the jeweler went home a light dawned. "What," his wife asked, "did you want that \$1,000 for?" The thieves had made the jeweler, whose name was Henri, pay for the gems with his own money.

As a train was approaching Sheffield a man seated in one of the compartments noticed a lady looking troubled, and asked her what was the matter. "I've lost my ticket, and they will charge me with fraud," said the lady. "Oh, never mind; I'll work a little dodge with the guard," and he got his own ticket out of his pocket and tore the corner off and gave it to the

lady. When the train arrived at Sheffield the guard collected all the tickets but one. "Where is your ticket, sir?" he asked of the gentleman. "I gave it to you." "No, you didn't," replied the guard. "I shall have to call the station-master." When the station-master arrived, he said: "Where is your ticket, young man?" "I gave it to the guard. See if he has a ticket with a corner torn off," replied the sharp man. On searching, of course the guard found it. "Now," said the young man, "see if this fits it," as he gave him the corner of the ticket. A look of surprise came over the guard's face, and he crept out of the carriage dumfounded.

OUR COMIC COLUMN.

Teacher to small boy—What does the proverb say about those who live in glass houses? Small boy—Pull down the blinds.

Aunt Anna asked her little nephew what he would like to give his cousin for his birthday. "I know," he answered, "but I ain't big enough."

"What makes Bliggins keep tooting his automobile horn?" "He's economizing. The horn is the only part of the machine he can exercise without its costing him a lot of money."

Little Eleanor, who was very fond of chickens, stood crying over a dead rooster. Thinking that something good ought to be said, she remarked between her sobs: "He was always so glad when one of the hens laid an egg."

"John, did you take the note to Mr. Jones?" "Yes, but I don't think he can read it." "Why so, John?" "Because he is blind, sir. While I wur in the room he axed me twice where my hat wur, and it wur on my head all the time."

A house in Wellsville, Ohio, was recently moved by electric power taken from a trolley line. The house was being moved along the street where there was an electric car line. Two cars were hitched to the house by a rope, and it was quickly pulled to its new destination.

Little Willie Ennis of the Falls of Schuylkill is a youth with two ruling passions in life, one an inordinate liking for fishing, and the other a peculiar aversion for school. When Willie was returning from the Schuylkill yesterday, having spent the afternoon in endeavoring to catch fish, he was accosted by a rather old man. "Did you catch anything to-day?" the man inquired. "Not yet," Willie answered, "but I will when I reach home."

There was no love lost between Rufus and his teacher. Rufus thought the teacher was a severe and occasionally unjust person, who had never known what it was to be young and full of fun, while the teacher considered the little darky both stupid and mischievous. "You are not attending to what I say, Rufus," said the teacher one day in the midst of an address to her class. "Yes, teacher, truly I is," said Rufus, with the reversion to the speech he had learned at home, which often accompanied great earnestness. "You should never say 'I is!'" commanded the teacher. "I have told you that a hundred times. You know the correct form. There are no exceptions to its use. Give me two examples at once." "Yes'm," said Rufus, meekly. "I am one of de letters of de alphabet. I am a pronoun."

The Defeated Mormon

By Horace Appleton

"She'd be a trim little craft in fair weather, but she looks limp and forlorn enough to have weathered a line gale."

And Captain Wright, stalwart, brown, and bearded, passenger on the *Servia*, three days out from Liverpool, cast a glance from under his bushy eyebrows at a young girl leaning on the railing, looking drearily over the water.

"There's something wrong in that quarter," said the master of the *Servia*, following the glance. "The girl has lost her reckoning. She belongs to that party, and yet she tries to avoid them. I wish—"

"Thunder!" growled Captain Wright, as a tall man with very white face and very black eyes and mustache, joined her at that moment. "See that sanctimonious-looking fellow? I'll argue he's as treacherous as a viper! See her draw away from him? I'd like to pitch him overboard!"

Captain Burbank regarded his friend with a meaning, quizzical smile.

"Isn't this interest in a woman something unusual for Captain Wright?"

"I'm not interested in her as a woman," he replied; "but I like to see fair play. That fellow's like a serpent. He has charmed her, and yet she is frightened at him. She's an English girl, you see, and I'll wager he's carrying her to America for some fiendish purpose. It's rather late in the day to accuse me of weakness towards women," he concluded, in an injured tone.

"Only chaffing, old boy," Captain Burbank returned, as he walked away.

The party, of which the girl seemed to be an unwilling factor, numbered six—two principals, seemingly, and four subordinates.

One of the former was a dull-eyed, yellow-faced, middle-aged woman; the other, Captain Wright's "antipathy."

When together, each peculiar type of face was unpleasantly heightened by contrast. Of the other four women, all of whom looked under thirty, the sad, sweet-faced girl was the youngest and apparently the only unhappy one.

The Surprise, in which Captain Wright had sailed from Lockport for ten years, being "hauled up" for pretty extensive repairs, he had made a trip to Liverpool with Captain Burbank to attend to some foreign business.

He was a confirmed bachelor of forty. Some thought he was bashful, and compassionately encouraged him with smiles and bright glances. Others believed he hated women, and gave him a wide berth. There were a score of likely girls in Lockport, but in his home coming intervals he treated them with uniform civility, nothing more.

"Don't you wish you had been as level-headed?" he inquired of Captain Bliss, who was bantering him on his unimpressibility, and whose domestic infelicity was the talk of the town.

"Women are all well enough if you don't get entangled with them. Throw your ballast of common sense overboard, give a woman command of the ship, and she'll crowd on sail, capsize it, and swamp you both. I've seen it over and over."

He was now adding a new chapter to his experience.

He was possessed to know the relation between the English girl and the man who was her shadow. He hated the insinuating smile that never called a responsive one to her face. He marked his exclusive attentions to her at the table

with keen gray eyes, which, deep-set beneath shaggy eyebrows, seemed to see nothing and saw everything. He longed savagely to crush in his strong brown palm the slim white hand, with tapering pink nails, with which his "antipathy" drew her arm through his for a promenade on deck. But Captain Wright was rather given to violent dislikes.

The two "principals" were plainly Americans. The nationality of the other three was more doubtful. When on deck they huddled up together and talked in whispers.

* * * * *

"Confound it! A pretty fool I am. What business is it of mine? Let the girl go to Tophet. She's let that oily rascal lead her off, and now she's repenting. Just like a woman!"

Thus growled Captain Wright, scowling at the placid stars as he walked the deck at two o'clock in the morning, maddening thoughts of his "antipathy" having banished sleep.

"Hang it all!" he said, for the fourth time, holding his cigar between his thumb and finger for a moment, "it's fair play I want to see—only fair play. Always had a mania for it since snow-balling days. Got myself into more trouble than a little on account of it. I'd see it in this case if there wasn't such a gang of women. Hang the women! I'd rather have a nest of hornets about my ears."

Having eased his mind a little, he resumed his cigar more calmly.

The night was clear. The comet was speeding downwards to quench its train of fire below the dim, watery horizon. A shadowy ship was becalmed beneath it.

Something as dark and shadowy glided past the captain's seat. It was a slight, girlish figure, in long, dark drapery. The step was noiseless.

She paused by the railing of the deck.

"I must do it! I must do it! Heaven forgive me!" he heard her say, as she gathered her skirts in her hand with a swift movement.

He divined her purpose on the instant. With two strides he reached her and drew her back.

A low cry came from her. She looked up quickly into the bearded face, showing dimly in the starlight, which revealed hers also.

"Oh!" she said, breathing hard.

It was the young English girl.

He half pulled her to a seat. He could feel her form trembling—quivering with excessive agitation.

Had Captain Wright's wonted wisdom borne him company on this occasion, he would have curbed his curiosity and sent her below peremptorily. Instead, he asked:

"Why were you going to spring overboard?"

"It was the only thing I could do," she returned, in a pathetic whisper, that made the captain feel "womanish" in spite of himself. "I have done very wrong. I have run away from home to go to America with these people. I dare not go on and I dare not go back. Even if I would I could never get away from them. He," and she shuddered, "would follow me too closely."

"Who are these people?" he asked.

"They call themselves Mormons."

The captain blew a soft, low, prolonged whistle under his breath.

"And you ran away from home to join the Mormons?"

"It seems a dreadful thing to you, don't it? You think I deserve to be unhappy?" she asked, in that forlorn half-whisper. "Perhaps you wouldn't blame me so much if you knew how I felt about it. Mr. Bellows talked and talked until he persuaded me. I don't know how it was, but I couldn't resist him. A devoted religious life had always seemed beautiful to me. He said theirs was the only true church. He

pictured my happiness when I should become one of such a noble band of men and women. He said I was not worthy unless I was willing to leave home, friends, everything; but the sacrifice would have compensation—I should receive a hundredfold more in this life, and in the world to come, life everlasting.

"He don't seem good now," she went on, hurriedly. "I am afraid of him. When you caught my arm I thought he had followed me. I don't want him to touch me or speak to me; I can't bear to look into his eyes. Last evening he said something to me; I knew then I must get away from them. I am afraid of that woman, but the others seem contented enough. Why didn't you let me go?" and the agitated voice broke in a flood of tears.

Youth, beauty, and innocence in tears. Off guard at the beginning, Captain Wright found himself where boasted strength becomes perfect weakness.

How it happened he never knew, but all at once he was holding the lovelorn, foolish little maiden in a close embrace.

"Have I frightened you?" he asked, relaxing his hold, as she struggled in vague alarm. "I have not been gentle enough. I am a big, rough, homely sailor, but I am your best friend. You have only to say the word and I will lift you out of your trouble at once. Will you marry me?"

The sudden proposal startled her, and might well have startled the captain himself. An hour, nay, twenty minutes before, he would sooner have thought of deeding his property to his "antipathy" or himself jumping overboard.

By some mystic mental alchemy, his whole being was transformed—a warm, rich, all-powerful love was surging through his veins. This woe-begone, misguided girl had sounded the deep tenderness of his nature. He had not dreamed of this supreme moment in his first disclaimed pity for her: The right one had found him at the right moment—and he was floundering helplessly over head and ears in love like a boy.

"It takes you by surprise," he said. "You cannot at once trust me to that extent. I can give you a pleasant home. Captain Burbank has known me all my life. I refer you to him. As your husband, I can remove you effectually from the power of your past associates. Can't you like me a little?"

She drew herself away from him without answering. The comet was burning near its grave. She sought the Pole star in its unending calm. So true and steady seemed the friend beside her; she had liked him from the first day she had seen him on deck.

But his wife? Was this the guise in which the hero of her girlish fancies had come? What a prosaic offer of marriage! She felt defrauded of something. Even in her sore strait, she hesitated to accept the alternative.

How should the great blundering, warm-hearted captain, who knew as little of girls' hearts as of Jupiter's moons, understand how to pilot his bark in this unknown latitude?

"I wanted to be loved if I ever married," she said, wistfully. "You only pity me."

The remark cleared his way a little.

"Perhaps it was pity at first," he said, slowly; "but don't they say 'pity is akin to love?' I can't make flowery speeches. I don't know how to talk love to a woman. But my heart seems all alive with little quivering tendrils reaching out to you. I have felt pretty near Heaven the last half hour, because I was with you."

His voice trembled. Ethel Vane's heart responded. The heaven of love that was to change her nature began its work.

Both her hands fluttered into his like lily leaves.

"I will do just as you wish," she said, softly.

With her hands tightly clasped, he unfolded a plan to her,

after which she slipped back to her berth quietly, unobserved. The captain shook himself, walked across the deck, and wondered if he had not been napping. The whole thing had been so unexpected. But his absurdly happy feeling did not allow him to reason clearly. He went back to his state-room to await the coming dawn.

* * * * *

The next morning Ethel pleaded a severe headache, and the party went down to breakfast, leaving her in her berth.

After breakfast, Mr. Bellows, heading the procession for a turn on deck, came face to face with his new disciple promenading on the arm of Captain Wright!

No pen could do justice to the situation. Mr. Bellows halted abruptly. He was dumb for the space of ten seconds.

"This lady is under my protection, I will relieve you," he said in a bland tone, veiling his anger under the insinuating smile that was so maddening to the captain.

"She has exchanged protectors," said the captain, concisely.

"She has done no such thing," flashed the other.

"Who would have thought she was such an arch little hypocrite?" screamed the yellow woman, her dull eyes glowing with a green flame. "Use your authority over her, Mr. Bellows."

"What a vile little sinner! I knew she'd prove a turncoat," chorused the other candidates for the discipleship of Joe Smith, glad at the humiliation of the favorite of Mr. Bellows.

Ethel was trembling. The captain stood like a veritable sphinx in the midst of the tumult. His face showed wicked exultation. For a man who preferred hornets to angry women, he seemed wonderfully at ease.

"You must come with us at once," said Mr. Bellows, authoritatively, grasping Ethel's arm.

The captain brushed off the white hand as if it had been a noxious insect.

"How dare you insult my wife?" he asked, a slow, dangerous light creeping into his eyes.

"Your wife!" repeated the other, with a sneer.

"Your wife!" mimicked the yellow chaperon.

"Wife!" chorused the others.

"It is false!" shouted Mr. Bellows.

"Be careful how you make rash assertions," warned the captain.

Just then a colored functionary shuffling down the staircase trolled by a mere coincidence:

"She's gone to join de Mor—mons,
De gay—and—fes—tive Mor—mons."

Mr. Bellows glared at the captain as if he had "put up" this bit of side acting.

"Prove your assertions," he said.

"Captain Burbank or Lawyer Hadley will set your mind at rest," returned the captain, as he led his new-made bride away.

The baffled Bellows and his party surrendered. Evidently they were convinced of the truth of Captain Wright's claim.

"Caught at last, by Jove!" said Captain Burbank, slapping his friend's shoulder confidently.

"Fair play," said the captain, with a roguish twinkle in his eye. "It was the only way I could see fair play. Always had a mania for it from a boy. Remember when we were at school!"

From her pleasant home in Lockport, Ethel wrote to her friends. Three years later she visited them, with a bright boy to pave the way to reconciliation. Neither she nor her husband regret the foolish escapade that gave them to each other.

(Continued from page 16.)

confirm our apprehensions in regard to Bonnet?" answered the maiden.

"No; but I have seen Bonnet talking with Kidd, and I am sure the rascal has not told the pirate captain anything to cause us trouble. I have decided that Bonnet did not overhear us. Now, dear one, go to your quarters. We know not but Bonnet may be prowling near."

"I will go in a moment. But first, I must tell you something. Earlier to-night, I saw Bonnet talking in earnest whispers with one of the pirates called Gaspardo—the giant Italian, you know. I heard your name mentioned. I want to warn you, Jack, that I think Bonnet was plotting something with the huge, villainous Italian," answered Bertha.

"It may be so. Bonnet would like nothing better than to rid himself of me without danger to himself. I shall keep an eye on the Italian as well as on Bonnet hereafter."

"Do so, by all means, Jack. And now good-night. I shall pray that no harm may befall you."

Jack stooped and kissed the devoted girl, and then she glided away toward her quarters in the forecastle. Jack paced the deck for a long time.

At last Bonnet came to relieve him. The men of his watch sought their hammocks and the youth descended to his cabin.

Day dawned, and under a cloudless sky and a fair wind the pirate fleet swept onward. Toward noon a distant sail was sighted.

"Sail, ho!" shouted the lookout on Kidd's ship.

The pirate captain sprang into the crosstrees glass in hand, and long and searchingly he looked at the distant sail. Presently he announced:

"She is a schooner and looks to me like an armed cruiser. Jack, pass the signals to the other ships of our fleet to show the English flag, and run up the same colors at our masthead. I rather think the distant schooner is a cruiser of war."

Jack hastened to obey.

In a few moments the flag of England was flying from the mastheads of the four pirate vessels. The pirate captain then signaled the vessels of his fleet not to make any hostile demonstration, unless such a showing first came from his own ship.

Very soon Kidd made out that the schooner showed the English flag. She bore down on the pirate fleet. Jack was excited and he prayed that chance might give him the opportunity to gain the English schooner with Bertha.

When she was nearer the ship commanded by Kidd than to any of the other pirate vessels, the schooner hailed.

Kidd replied.

"This is the ship Scorpion, bound from Bristol to New York, Captain Day in command!"

"This is the schooner, war cruiser, Balmortan, Captain Hale in command. We are cruising for pirates. Have you seen any suspicious sail?" answered the commander of the schooner.

"No, sir," replied Kidd.

Then some courteous exchange of remarks followed, and the war schooner tacked away. The pirates dipped the colors as a salute of parting, and the schooner did the same. Soon she was far away to the north, and Kidd laughed heartily, as he said:

"There was no valuable plunder to be had on that vessel, so I cared not to show fight."

Jack watched the receding sail sadly, and he thought how terrible it was to be within sight and hearing of friends, and yet be unable to let them know of his terrible situation.

The day went by and the pirate fleet kept steadily on its course. No sail was sighted and once more night fell. Then Captain Kidd was alone in his cabin. Suddenly his eyes fell upon a scrap of paper on a table. He snatched it up, and saw

there was some writing in pencil upon it. At a glance he recognized the writing.

"Ha! The same hand that traced the letter I received at my island, which told that Bonnet meditated treachery wrote this!" he exclaimed.

Then he read the note and his face darkened. Going to the door, he shouted:

"Diego! Diego!"

Bertha was in the officer's mess room, near. Hearing the pirate, she hastened to him.

"Send the first mate to me and look alive!" ordered Kidd.

Bertha hastened to the deck, and told Jack Kidd wanted him. She was alarmed. And she added:

"The pirate chief seems very angry. I fear there is trouble ahead for you."

Jack replied reassuringly and then he hastened to Kidd.

As he came into the presence of the pirate captain, the latter said:

"I have just found in my cabin a note from the same unknown who sent me a warning against Bonnet on the island. The note states Bonnet is plotting with the crew. From this out I want you to watch him most closely. Let me but once make certain that he is guilty, and I'll hang him from the yard's arm."

Jack said he would obey orders, and then Kidd dismissed him.

He went back to his duty on deck. The midnight hour, which would end his watch was approaching, and the night had darkened. Jack stood leaning upon the rail.

The immediate vicinity was deserted, and the sea lanterns shone dimly through a mist which hung over the waters.

Though Jack heard no sound of an approach, and he had no thought that danger was near, at that moment a huge, dark form glided noiselessly from the shadow of the mainmast. On came this giant man stealthily. He was Gaspardo, the Italian.

Suddenly Jack felt himself grasped by a pair of strong hands, and before he fairly realized that he was assaulted, he was hurled over the rail headlong into the dark sea.

CHAPTER XIII.

RESCUED FROM THE WAVES—A SHIP BLOWN UP AT SEA.

As Jack fell into the sea he shouted wildly for help, and his voice was heard by one of the crew who was a member of the youth's watch.

Gaspardo had glided quickly away and entered the forecastle unseen. All the men in the forecastle were then asleep. The Italian noiselessly got into his bunk and feigned slumber.

Meantime the shout "Man overboard!" had been raised upon the deck. The sailors of Jack's watch were all alarmed. They sprang to lower a boat, and all haste was made to lay the vessel to. The pirate captain was aroused by the commotion and he hastened to the deck.

A faint shout sounded from the sea far astern as Kidd appeared upon the deck. He knew the voice was that of Jack. Already the sailors knew it was the young mate who was overboard, though none had witnessed the assault of the Italian.

A boat was quickly lowered away, and the men in it pulled in the direction from which Jack's voice had last sounded.

It was impossible to discern objects at any distance upon the waves. But from time to time as they rowed, the men in the boat heard the sound of Jack's voice.

Fortunately he was a strong swimmer, and the waves were not rolling very high. He battled desperately when he came to the surface after his headlong plunge.

He saw the lights of the Scorpion receding and an awful fear seized upon him. Shouting as he struggled to keep afloat, he watched the lights of the pirate vessel.

When he saw the ship was losing headway he took heart, thinking he was not to be deserted, but that the vessel would lay to and that an effort would be made to rescue him.

The men who had manned the boat answered Jack's shouts as they rowed toward him, and their voices encouraged him.

He tried to be calm and drew long, deep breaths, and moderated the fierce exertions which were rapidly taking away his strength. He made only sufficient efforts to keep his head above water, and the boat steadily drew nearer.

At last the boat drew close. Then a cheer from the men in it told him they had discovered him. He swam for the boat, and when he had almost reached it, he uttered a terrible cry of agony. At that moment he was seized with a cramp in both legs, which gave him intense pain and almost rendered him helpless. But still he used his arms in frantic efforts.

There ensued a few moments which seemed like an eternity to the imperiled youth, and then at last, when the boat had almost reached him, he was grasped by a pair of strong hands and drawn, fainting, into the boat.

Then, while the other men of the boat's crew bent to their oars and sent the little craft toward the pirate ship, one of the seamen gave Jack a drink from a pocket flask and sought to revive him.

As he had not swallowed much of the sea water, he soon revived, and when at length the boat reached the ship, he was so far recovered as to be able to ascend to the deck with but little assistance.

Captain Kidd welcomed him heartily, and Bertha, who had come upon the deck as the rescue boat put off, stood by, white and trembling, daring not to trust her voice to speak to Jack, but thanking heaven in her heart for his deliverance.

She had suffered an agony of suspense and fear for her youthful lover while the boat was gone. The reaction of strong emotions, which she experienced, made her weak and faint.

Captain Kidd led Jack to his own cabin, and placed a steaming glass of hot grog before him. He made the lad drink, and then asked:

"How did you fall overboard? I cannot imagine how such an accident could have befallen an experienced sailor on a calm night like this."

"I did not fall overboard," Jack replied.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean I was thrown into the sea!"

"Ha! Who did it? Give me the name of the wretch, and he shall hang for it!"

"I did not see the man's face. I was seized from behind as I stood by the rail. I do not know who my cowardly assailant was."

"Think you he was Bonnet?"

"I do not know. But I suspect that man or some villain whom he bribed."

"I would make an example of the rascal whoever he is."

"If my assailant was not Bonnet, I suspect he was Gaspardo, the giant Italian."

"Why do you say that?"

Jack explained.

He related what Bertha had told him.

When he had made known all that he had learned from her, about her having seen Bonnet and the Italian evidently conversing about him, he added:

"The cabin boy is a good lad, and I do not wish that Bonnet or Gaspardo should become his enemies, so I ask you to say nothing to them, or any one about what the lad told me."

"I will not do so."

"Thank you."

"And of course it would be useless to accuse Bonnet or Gaspardo on this evidence alone."

"That is true."

"And so we will say nothing to them for the present, and do you allow the crew to suppose you fell overboard. Meantime, I mean to play the part of a spy aboard my own ship. I have the impression growing upon me, that Bonnet is plotting among the men as I have already said."

Soon Jack left Captain Kidd's cabin.

And the youth was feeling pretty nearly himself again. On the way to the deck he met Bertha.

The disguised girl was waiting to speak to him alone.

They exchanged a few affectionate remarks, and then they parted.

The following day, just after the midday hour, the lookout shouted:

"Sail, ho!"

Captain Kidd was on deck, and so was Jack. The lad seized his glass, and soon made out the sail which the lookout had sighted. Her position was due south. Kidd took the glass from Jack's hand, and watched the distant sail through it.

He ordered the course of the Scorpion to be set toward the unknown vessel.

When this was done and the distant craft grew larger, Kidd at length announced:

"She's a galleon! And she shall be our prize! Ho! Boatswain! Clear the deck for action and pipe all hands to quarters!"

Then he had the signal flags used to notify all the three other vessels of his fleet to bear down upon the galleon. The latter vessel tacked away from its original course and spread all sail. The Scorpion followed. Her spread of canvas was much greater than that of the galleon, and she steadily gained upon the Spanish vessel.

The other ships of the pirate fleet made as good headway as the Scorpion. When the chase began the pirate vessel showed no flag. But soon Kidd ran up the black banner of the buccaneers.

His vessel was soon near the galleon. Then he ordered an experienced gunner to send a solid shot across the deck of the galleon. In a few moments the dull boom of the discharged cannon sounded over the sea, and the ball hurtled over the deck, cutting away a spar in its course.

But still the Spanish vessel labored on. The people upon it, seeing the black flag of the buccaneers, must have felt the most awful terror and despair, and believed they were doomed. The galleon was provided with half a dozen guns, but her captain must have realized that he was powerless to defend his craft against the whole fleet of pirate vessels.

All at once a commotion of some sort was seen to be taking place on the deck of the galleon. Men struggled and fought with each other to get at the boats. One was lowered, crowded with men.

"What means this? The Spaniards are taking to the boats. The fools! They cannot think to escape me thus! I do not understand their conduct! Give them another shot, gunner. Aim at the boat!" shouted Kidd, in surprised tones.

But before the gunner could train his great gun upon the boat, from the galleon an awful and astonishing thing took place.

There came the sound of a terrific explosion aboard the galleon.

The vessel seemed to be lifted into the air, and then it burst apart and into a thousand fragments, while dense black smoke and a column of red flames ascended into the sky.

Kidd uttered a furious oath.

"They have blown up the galleon! They have robbed me of a rich prize! But the boat is safe! Hold, gunner! Do not fire upon the boat!" he shouted.

The men who had escaped from the doomed galleon showed a white flag, and they rowed toward the Scorpion.

As the Spaniard's boat drew near, a tall man stood up in it, and making a trumpet of his hands, shouted:

"Don't fire! I am Francis Lolonis!"

Kidd seemed thunderstruck—completely astonished.

Jack knew the speaker in the boat had given the name of one of the boldest pirates of the West Indies.

The boat came on. Presently Kidd, who had observed the man who had hailed him through his glass, cried out:

"By Heavens it's true! That man is Lolonis himself!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MAN FROM THE GALLEON—A SURPRISED PLOTTER.

The boat from the Spanish galleon contained nine men besides Lolonis, the pirate chief.

In a short time the boat's crews was aboard the Scorpion.

Meantime what the explosion had left of the galleon afloat had become a blazing wreck.

Much as he was enraged at the loss of a valuable prize, of whose capture he had been quite certain, Captain Kidd welcomed Lolonis, the celebrated pirate of the Western waters, as soon as the villain stepped upon his deck.

Kidd and Lolonis were old friends and comrades.

Lolonis was a Frenchman, and he was noted for his cynical politeness. One writer has said—"He was the most polite villain who ever scuttled a ship or cut a throat."

When a few words had been exchanged between Kidd and the French pirate, and they had shaken hands, the latter, indicating the trembling Spaniards who had come with him, said:

"My dear captain, I have taken the liberty to assure these fellows, if they brought me to you, their lives should be spared. I trust you will make good my words."

"Certainly, captain. The Spaniards can join my crew, or I'll set them ashore on the first land we sight," answered Kidd.

"A thousand thanks, my dear captain. You see the captain of the Galleon preferred death to capture, so he set fire to the magazine. When he had set the fuse he rushed on deck and told the men. Then came the scramble for the boats. I have a strong arm, *mon ami*, and so I was one of the fortunate ones, and I got a place in the boat."

"But how came you of all men aboard the galleon?" demanded Kidd.

"There is quite a story to be told in explanation."

"Come to my cabin. I would learn all about this matter, and I want to hear if you have any news for me from the Western waters," said Kidd.

Then he turned to Jack and told him to attend the men from the galleon. Jack saluted and Kidd led Lolonis below deck.

In the cabin the two pirate captains conversed for some time.

Lolonis told Kidd he had been captured three months previously, and taken to the island of Hispaniola—now called San Domingo—there he was thrown into the Spanish prison under sentence of death. But by bribing one of the guards through a friend outside, he had escaped. Then he became a fugitive, and hid in the forest of the island. He suffered great hardships for weeks, but he was finally able to reach the island of Tortuga, leagues north of Hispaniola, by making the voyage in an open boat, which he had stolen from a fisherman.

The Governor of Tortuga was in league with the buccaneers, who virtually possessed that island. But before Lolonis could make himself known there, and, indeed, almost as soon as he had landed, he was seized by some Spaniards who had a lugger anchored near the coast. Those men belonged to a press gang of Havana, and without recognizing Lolonis, who gave them an assumed name, they took him to Havana and put him aboard the galleon from which he had escaped. He was

compelled to sail as one of the crew of that craft, and to the last his identity was not suspected by any one aboard the galleon.

In conclusion, Lolonis said:

"My dear captain, I have lost my own good ship, and all my crew has been slain or captured. You see me empty handed and ready to enlist with you. And I have news for you. Unknown, as a pretended trader, I've visited the rich Spanish cities of Maracaibo and Gibraltar, on the gulf of Venezuela, and found millions in gold and jewels are held there. Also that the towns are not well provided for defense. When I was captured, I was planning to organize a buccaneer fleet to plunder those towns. Now, if we can agree, I propose that you sail with your fine fleet to attack Maracaibo and Gibraltar. My knowledge of the place will be of value to you, and I ask only a fair share of the plunder."

"You have spoken of virtually the very plans which I have in mind. You shall be the second in command of all my fleet, and we will take the rich Spanish towns if it can be done. You shall have a lieutenant's share of all the plunder secured. Will that satisfy you?"

"It will. We shall secure gold enough to make us all rich for the rest of our lives, if we capture the Spanish towns," replied the French pirate, with much enthusiasm.

A little later Jack was called into Kidd's cabin and formally introduced to Lolonis.

Kidd asked the youth about the nine Spaniards from the destroyed galleon.

"Those men have chosen to join you, sir," replied Jack, truthfully.

"Good! I do not place much confidence in impressed men, but these few fellows can do no harm against my strong crew, if they are so disposed, so we will make what use we can of them," replied Kidd.

The following day the pirate fleet sailed steadily on its voyage, and nothing worthy of record transpired.

At night, an hour after he had retired to his cabin, Captain Kidd, attired in the rough garb of a common sailor, and with a false beard on his face, and an old storm hat pulled well down over his eyes, crept to the deck stealthily.

He was evidently bent upon making good his promise to Jack, that he would play the part of a spy upon Bonnet and Gaspardo, the Italian, for he went cautiously to the entrance of the forecastle.

There he crouched down in the shadows and seemed to listen eagerly. He presently heard the murmur of voices. It was Jack's watch. The youth was pacing the deck. Since he had been thrown overboard he was apprehensive that another attempt might be made upon his life, and he was always watchful and upon his guard.

Owing to this he saw the shadowy figure of Captain Kidd as the latter stole across the deck to the forecastle door. Jack did not recognize the pirate chief, but owing to the disguise he wore, he took him for one of the crew.

Kidd's manner told Jack the supposed common hand was bent upon some secret undertaking, and the youth set out to investigate the matter.

He cautiously made his way along the deck until he was able to steal upon the crouching figure at the forecastle entrance from the rear. But Kidd suddenly turned noiselessly and saw him.

"Silence! Do not speak! I am Captain Kidd," whispered the pirate instantly.

"Now listen! The infernal plotter, Bonnet, is at work," he added, as Jack stooped beside the door.

The youth immediately heard the murmur of voices, and he knew, as he recognized his tones, that one of the speakers was Bonnet.

The rascal presently raised his voice a little, and Jack and Kidd caught his words quite distinctly.

The pirate mate said:

"My plan is well laid. I'll cut the braggard Kidd's throat while he sleeps. And then you who are with me in the undertaking will be strong enough to overpower those whom we do not trust. We will seize the Scorpion and in the night change our course, and by the next day we'll be far away from Kidd's fleet. I only wish I could be with my old crew of the Rover. I was so long captain of that vessel before Kidd deposed me, that I am sure my influence would induce the men aboard the Rover to join me."

When Bonnet paused, Kidd whispered to Jack:

"You hear. Bonnet is a self-confessed traitor and his life is forfeited. Come with me."

Kidd crept away noiselessly, and Jack followed. The night was one of semi-gloom. But in the vague light Jack saw that the face of the dreaded pirate chief wore an awful expression.

He paused beside the rail. Then he said:

"Silently call the men of your watch together."

Jack did so. Then he stood wondering what was to happen next.

"Now call Bonnet, and when he comes upon the deck, secure the forecastle door, so as to keep the men who are in his plot prisoners there. I judge there are not many of them, for the loud breathing of a large number of the men told me, as I listened at the door, that most of the crew were asleep," directed Kidd, in low, stern tones.

Jack obeyed.

Bonnet came out upon the deck without delay. It was almost time for him to relieve Jack. Probably he thought he was called for that purpose.

As soon as Bonnet passed through the forecastle door, Jack bolted the portal securely. Bonnet wheeled upon him instantly. His suspicions were evidently aroused.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FATE OF BONNET—MAN OR "GHOST."

Captain Kidd and the sailors of Jack's watch were at some little distance. The pirate chief stood in the gloomy shadows of the deck-house.

No doubt Bonnet did not see Kidd.

"Why have you fastened the door?" Bonnet demanded in half threatening tones as he faced Jack.

"I am acting under orders," answered the youth.

"Whose orders?"

"Captain Kidd's."

Bonnet started. Jack saw his hand fall upon the butt of a pistol in his belt.

It seemed the pirate conspirator was about to draw the weapon.

Involuntarily Jack started back.

And he too grasped a weapon in his belt.

For an instant the two stared at each other.

Then the voice of Captain Kidd rang out, and he sprang across the deck.

"You are under arrest, you double-dyed traitor!" he thundered.

Bonnet turned like a flash.

As he faced the pirate chief he drew his pistol.

But he did not discharge the weapon, for upon the instant Kidd leveled his own.

"Down with your weapon or I fire!"

The deadly tube was on a level with Bonnet's head, and behind it gleamed the fierce and threatening eyes of the terrible king of the buccaneers.

Bonnet let the hand that held his pistol fall to his side, and a shudder ran through his frame.

"Seize that man!" ordered Kidd, turning to the man upon the deck.

His word was law with the sea rovers. By the rules of the pirates a captain at sea had supreme power. The men made a rush at Bonnet.

In a moment he was seized and disarmed.

"Bind his hands!" ordered Kidd, and it was done.

But Bonnet began to protest.

"What does this mean? What have I done? Who accuses me?" he cried.

"I am your accuser and your judge. I am the witness against you. Men, I just overheard this wretch plotting to murder me and seize the ship!"

Angry murmurs were heard on all sides.

"What is the doom which such a traitor should meet?" Kidd went on.

"Death! Death! Death!"

The terrible word was repeated by the men without one dissenting voice.

"You have well said. Hang the wretch from the yard's arm! Get a rope and up with him! He shall serve as an example to his friends, and as an example of the pirates' justice!"

"Mercy! Mercy!" cried the doomed man.

But his appeal fell upon deaf ears.

He was dragged under the yard's arm. A noose was put about his neck. The fatal cord was thrown over the yard, and a few moments later Bonnet was drawn up.

And then an astonishing thing occurred.

The rope parted, and Bonnet fell upon the deck. His hands flew free, and before a hand could be raised against him, he bounded to his feet, and with a wild yell bounded across the deck, leaped the rail and plunged into the sea.

"More treachery! Launch the long boat! Over with it! Quick! Let him not cheat the noose!" roared Kidd.

He sprang to the assistance of the men.

The long boat hung ready at the davits.

As quickly as possible it was launched.

Kidd sprang into it, lantern in hand, and others followed.

All hands looked eagerly upon the shadowy waves, and Kidd flashed the light of his lantern hither and yon.

But no trace of Bonnet was seen.

It seemed the sea had swallowed him up—that at once he had gone down to rise no more.

Jack remained upon the deck. By his orders the ship was laid too as quickly as it could be done. The men in the boat rowed about, searching for Bonnet.

But the night quest upon the sea was all in vain.

No floating object was seen.

At length Kidd ordered his men to pull to the ship.

"Bonnet is drowned! It must be so, and yet he could swim well. It must be that the rope strangled him so that he was weakened, so that he had not strength enough to keep afloat," said the pirate chief.

Soon he and his men were back aboard the ship.

On the deck Kidd picked up the cords with which Bonnet's hands were bound.

By the light of his lantern he examined them; then he cried "These cords were cut! A sharp knife was used!"

In a moment he had the rope which had parted under the weight of Bonnet in his hands.

"See! See!" he cried to Jack, who was at his side. "This rope, too, was evidently almost severed with a knife before Bonnet was drawn up. There is a traitor who is Bonnet's friend among the men on deck!"

"It must be so," assented Jack.

And he, too, examined the severed rope.

"I'll find the villain out yet. Let Bonnet's doom be his

warning. Now, my lad, open the forecastle door and call the men," continued Kidd.

Jack hastened to obey this order, and in a few moments the pirate crew came thronging upon the deck.

Kidd addressed them.

First he told of his discovery of the intended treachery of Bonnet; then he made known how the villain had been doomed to hang, and how he had gone to his death in the sea.

In conclusion he said:

"I believe Bonnet's influence alone has turned some of you against me. Now that we are well rid of him, I do not believe any of you will conspire against me. We have a great work before us. I have a plan to secure plunder enough to make you all rich for life. Let each man do his duty hereafter, and I will overlook the past."

Then he dismissed all hands after appointing one of his most trusted men to act in Bonnet's place as second mate.

After this the voyage of the pirate fleet was again continued without incident. Some days elapsed. One night Bertha went to meet Jack in a compartment back of the bulkhead and adjoining the magazine. This compartment was never visited, save by the ship's steward, to get out supplies. But Jack had procured a key. In the store-room he thought he and the maid could meet without fear of detection.

Bertha reached the door of the storage compartment just before midnight. Jack was not there, and the door was fast. All was darkness. But suddenly she saw a strange, faint light before the adjoining door which led to the magazine.

Then while the sight seemed to freeze her blood in her veins, and terror and astonishment held her as if she had suddenly been turned to stone, she beheld the figure of a man develop in the vague light at the magazine door.

Her eyes dilated, her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth, and her blood ran cold in her veins, for she believed she beheld the ghost of Bonnet. She recognized his face, which seemed pale and drawn in the strange light. Suddenly the thing glided toward her. Still she was held like a statue by the terror of it all. Nearer and nearer came the ghost or man whom she dreaded, but still the thrall held her like a spell.

CHAPTER XVI.

A HIDDEN FOE—ALMOST A MURDER.

Jack had not forgotten his appointment to meet Bertha, but he had been unavoidably detained upon the deck. At last he was able to leave his post.

As he approached the door of the compartment, in which the ship's stores were kept, he ventured to draw the slide on his lantern cautiously.

A shaft of light instantly penetrated the gloom before him, and he gave a tremendous start, as he beheld the slender figure of Bertha prone upon the floor before the closed door.

In a moment Jack was kneeling beside his disguised sweetheart.

She seemed lifeless and his grief almost mastered him as he thought that she was dead. And then, oh horror, he saw that a sailor's colored handkerchief was twisted tightly around her throat as if it had been used to strangle her.

He tore away the cruel thing with swift but trembling hands. And then he detected the faint pulsation of her heart.

He opened her garments at the throat. He raised her head. He poured some of the contents of his pocket flask down her throat. She swallowed it and did not strangle. He chafed her wrists. He sought in every way to bring her back to consciousness.

And while he worked to bring her back to life, unseen and unheard by him the door of the magazine was softly opened, and the face of Bonnet, his pirate foe, peered out at him.

If Jack could have seen the face of the buccaneer he would have known that he was no ghost, but that he was really Bonnet alive and ready for any deed of blood. Yes, mysteriously the pirate who was supposed to have leaped to his death in the sea was back aboard the Scorpion.

He was so near that he must surely have overheard the muttered words which Jack unconsciously uttered as he sought to revive his sweetheart.

And in these utterances Jack had revealed the secret of the supposed cabin boy.

For some moments Jack's attempts to restore Bertha to consciousness were unavailing.

But at length she began to breathe more freely, and gradually a faint color stole into her pale face.

At length Bertha uttered a long, deep drawn sigh, which was the most welcome sound Jack could have heard. To him it was the voice of the soul that was not dead—an utterance that told him the spirit of his beloved had come back to its earthly tenement—that she would live.

But Bertha's recovery was slow.

Bertha had had a wonderful escape, for at length she rallied and opened her eyes. Jack raised her to her feet anon, and supported her to his cabin. There she finally became able to speak. At first her utterances were thick and hoarse, but she gained strength and distinctness of speech as the moments went by. But she suffered from shock.

Jack placed her upon his cot and watched beside her until—while he assured her she had nothing to fear then—she became strong enough and sufficiently composed to tell him all.

She told how she had seen Bonnet, or his ghost, at the door of the magazine, and how she had fainted as the man, or spirit, approached her.

Jack was astonished and mystified.

"It was not a ghost that twisted the handkerchief about your neck. No! It was a man—a fiend in human form—who did that murderous deed, and as I live, Bertha, strange, improbable and amazingly mysterious though it is, I believe Bonnet was not drowned after all, but that he succeeded in boarding this ship unseen, and that he is now hidden somewhere aboard."

"Shall you tell Captain Kidd?"

"Yes. I must do so. Then I am sure that he will have every part of the ship searched."

"But may not Bonnet have learned my secret?"

"I think not. I know the villain's brutal character, and I am convinced that had he discovered the truth about you, he would have dragged you away to his hiding-place."

Bertha shuddered, and Jack pressed her hand reassuringly, as he said:

"From this time I will watch over you closely, until Bonnet is found. He shall not have another opportunity to molest you aboard this ship. But you have said he appeared before the door of the magazine?"

"Yes."

"Bertha," Jack said, after a pause, "everything considered I think I had better make a little investigation on my own account, before I tell Kidd or anyone about Bonnet. Perhaps I can locate his hiding place. The first place I shall visit will be the magazine."

CHAPTER XVII.

JACK SAVES THE PIRATE SHIP.

Bertha clung to Jack for a moment, as if she felt that he was about to face a peril of the greatest magnitude.

He hastily spoke some reassuring words, and then gently releasing himself from her clinging hold, he stealthily left the cabin.

Bertha went to the door with Jack, and while he proceeded

along the passage toward the door of the magazine, the young girl watched him apprehensively.

She held the door on a crack, and she was able to see Jack dimly until he reached the door of the magazine.

Jack silently turned the door knob.

And in a moment he had satisfied himself that the portal was locked. No light came through the key-hole, and the door fitted so tightly, that he could detect no escaping ray of light.

Some moments elapsed, and he began to find it difficult to control his suspenseful curiosity and impatience, when he was surprised, as well as alarmed, by hearing someone stealthily coming down the companion stairs.

Jack suspected some confederate of Bonnet's was coming. He was about to retreat to his cabin, but as he took a noiseless step in that direction, he saw the dimly visible figure of a man at the foot of the companion stairs.

A low, warning hiss was uttered by the person, and Jack knew that he was seen. It flashed upon him that in the gloom the other might mistake his identity, and so he stood still.

But he held his pistol ready in case he should need to make hasty use of it against the unknown.

"Is that you, Bonnet?" the latter whispered, coming nearer, and then Jack knew the speaker was Gaspardo.

"Yes," replied Jack, in like low cautious tones.

"The boat is ready lowered. Koon is in it. Make haste with your work. Have you set the time fuse in the magazine yet?"

"No. Kidd is restless to-night; more than once he has come into the passage and almost seen me. Go and tell Koon I will be with you in a few moments; I have a key you know. I shall enter the magazine directly," Jack replied.

The Italian glided away and ascended the companion stairs.

Jack's fears regarding the plot of the villainous Bonnet were completely confirmed. That the wretch meant to blow up the ship could not be doubted.

He was turning toward Kidd's cabin, when the door of the magazine opened.

Bonnet came out. He saw Jack. The pirate traitor carried a lantern, and its light enabled him to recognize the youth.

With the quickness of thought, he dashed down the lantern, and leaped at Jack's throat, brandishing a long bladed sheath knife, which he had whipped out.

Jack uttered a shout that rang through the ship, and as Bonnet leaped at him he discharged his pistol in the face of his desperate foe.

Bonnet uttered one terrible yell of agony, and crashed down upon the floor. At the same moment Kidd dashed out of his cabin, with a lamp in one hand, and a pistol in the other.

Jack leaped over the prostrate form of Bonnet, and dashed into the magazine, shouting:

"Bonnet has been in the magazine! He meant to blow up the ship!"

Inside the magazine Jack saw by the light of his own lantern that Bonnet had carefully arranged for the almost immediate destruction of the ship.

He saw a train of powder was laid across the floor to the kegs containing the explosive, and a lighted fuse was placed at the end of the train nearest the door.

Jack snatched up the fuse.

Just then Kidd burst into the room.

Jack threw the fuse into the passage, and leaping upon it, trampled out its flame.

"You have saved the ship!" cried Kidd. And with a glance at the body of the man who had meant to destroy the vessel, he added:

"And you have killed Bonnet!"

Jack saw that this was so. But he knew he had slain the pirate in self defense, and his conscience was satisfied.

Jack explained that Gaspardo and the fellow called Koon

were waiting for Bonnet in a lowered boat. Then they hastened to the deck.

But Bonnet's companions had heard the report of Jack's pistol, and taken the alarm.

As Kidd and Jack reached the deck, they saw the giant Italian and his comrade pulling away from the ship in the boat which they had secretly lowered.

Then, with his own hands, the pirate chief trained one of the ship's cannon upon the receding boat.

Presently the dull boom of the great gun sounded, and a solid shot struck the boat of the escaping men and shattered it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HISPANOLA! BERTHA BETRAYS HER SECRET.

Bertha, watching and listening at the door of Jack's cabin, learned all that had transpired after the youth left her presence.

The following day the island of Hispaniola was sighted in the distance. It was near nightfall when the land came in sight.

The next morning the pirate fleet anchored off the island.

There was a celebrated buccaneer at Hispaniola by the name of Michael Basco.

Kidd and Lolonis felt sure of the assistance of Basco. They wanted to secure more men and another vessel or two before they sailed to the Spanish dominions in South America to sack the towns of which Lolonis had told Kidd.

Early in the morning Kidd passed the order to his several vessels that the men might be allowed to land in squads, but that at no time more than one hundred of the members of the several crews should go on shore.

Then Kidd called Jack and said:

"You and Lolonis will go ashore with me in the long boat."

Jack wished Bertha to accompany him in Kidd's boat, and as soon as the pirate chief told him he was to go ashore, he hastened to look for his disguised sweetheart, whom he had not seen that morning.

Jack found Bertha ill in the bunk in the men's quarters.

There was a French surgeon of much skill aboard the ship, of whom it was said among the pirates, that he was an escaped convict from the French prison hulks.

Jack found this man at Bertha's side.

He asked the French doctor to step aside with him, and the latter complied.

Then Jack questioned him in regard to Bertha's prospects for recovery.

The pirate doctor replied:

"The boy has a form of ship fever which usually runs a regular course of some ten days. I should say that we need not apprehend serious results. But the lad will not be fit for duty for more than ten days to come at least."

The doctor went out directly after he had last spoken, and Jack was left alone with the sick girl.

He caressed her burning brow with his cool hand and told her he was about to go ashore with Captain Kidd.

But the lad cheered her depressed spirits as well as he could.

Then as he heard Kidd shouting for him Jack hastened to the deck.

A little later with the pirate chiefs, Kidd and Lolonis and a boat's crew, he reached the landing of the town on the island.

Jack was taken by Kidd and Lolonis to the house of Michael Basco. There the two pirates had a long interview with the old buccaneer, who had become a power in the place.

Jack was left in an anteroom during this interview. But when it was concluded the two pirates rejoined him, and their faces told him the conference with Basco had been satisfactory to them.

At night Jack went aboard the Scorpion with the two pirate chiefs.

The men were both the worse for wine.

And they boasted to Jack that Basco had proposed to become a partner in their enterprise of plundering the Spanish towns.

Also that he had agreed to furnish two vessels, and one hundred and sixty men.

During the three days which elapsed after that, the pirates were busy getting supplies aboard their ship.

On the fourth day accompanied by the two ships which Basco had provided, the pirate fleet set sail for the harbor of Hispaniola.

And yet Bertha's condition was but slightly changed.

The next day Jack was alone beside Bertha, when her wild and disconnected talk suddenly gave him the alarming conviction that she was in delirium. She seemed oblivious of his presence, and though he sought to quiet her, she went on talking.

"No! no, Jack, I cannot escape from the pirates with you. But you will not leave me? You love me too much, you will not let them find out that I am a girl—your sweetheart. You will not let the doctor know. I'm afraid of his sharp eyes. He seems to look into my mind. And sometimes I see Bonnet's ghost behind him, whispering to him," she said, in delirium, while Jack experienced intense alarm.

And as she paused, the French doctor started up from behind a great sea chest close beside Bertha's bunk. Jack knew the pirate surgeon had heard all.

CHAPTER XIX.

JACK AND THE PIRATE DOCTOR—A CAPTURE.

It was a moment of the most thrilling and dramatic surprise and consternation for Jack as he stood beside Bertha's bunk facing the pirate doctor, who had so suddenly revealed his presence.

Jack drew his revolver.

Instantly Jack brought the muzzle on a line with the Frenchman's heart, and in a voice hoarse with intensity and passion, he said:

"Swear, in the sight of Heaven, and by all you hold sacred, that you will not reveal what you have found out about your patient, or I swear I will kill you where you stand!"

"You have nothing to fear. I swear that I will not reveal the secret of this poor girl to mortal man. Never shall one word, calculated even to arouse a suspicion of the truth about her, pass my lips."

"Know then that I am an innocent victim of cruel and terrible circumstances, and that I am not a pirate at heart or from choice. You have heard it from the crew that I am an escaped convict, I doubt not. Such is the real truth. I was innocently convicted. I escaped from the prison hulks and reached a strange ship which was in the harbor at the time. That ship was really a vessel of Kidd's fleet, come under a false name to purchase supplies. The pirates received me well. Think you, with her memory in my heart, I would betray the secret of the poor girl whom you love? No, no—a thousand times no!" said the Frenchman, intensely, and there were tears in his eyes as he spoke of his daughter and held out to Jack a miniature of a sweet-faced young girl about Bertha's age.

And now the Frenchman's earnest, impassioned words carried the conclusion of his truth and sincerity to Jack's heart.

"And now that I trust you, let me say that I mean to desert the pirates and flee with my beloved at the first favorable opportunity," Jack said.

"Good! I suspected as much. You can always rely on me to assist you. Let us flee in company."

"We will do so. And I will confide the fact to you that there are two men of the old crew of the honest vessel in which I was captured, now on this pirate craft. They are Englishmen, and their names are White and Lance. I can rely upon them when the time to attempt our escape comes."

"I am glad of that. Where all can be fully trusted, there is strength in union."

"See! She is quiet now! I gave her a sedative just before you came in. She sleeps. The fever has reached the turning point. I believe her brain will be clear when she awakes, and that we shall have nothing further to fear from her delirium," answered the doctor, as the youth turned away.

He went out to the deck, and passed the sailor, whose approach he had heard.

After that Bertha's convalescence was rapid.

The course of the pirate fleet was now toward the important port of Maracaibo, in the north of the South American continent of which Lolonis had spoken to Kidd.

After a voyage of six hundred miles the pirate fleet arrived at the entrance of the vast bay which leads up to the city.

The City of Maracaibo was situated on an island at the head of the bay of Venezuela.

At night the pirate fleet crept up to the Gulf of Venezuela.

A little later, the youth was in conversation with the English sailor called White.

They did not talk long. Jack hastily told White what he desired. Then they parted. White soon rejoined Jack.

"I have found among the Spaniards a man named Miguel, who will try to get away in a boat during the darkest hours of the night, and carry the news of the pirates coming to the town on the shore," said White.

An hour later the brave Spanish sailor was drifting away from Kidd's ship in a small boat which his countrymen had lowered undetected, being favored by Jack, who was in command of the deck, and who managed to get the pirates of his watch away from the side of the vessel, from which the boat was quickly and noiselessly launched.

When Miguel had drifted for some distance from Kidd's ship he had no fear.

Jack and his friends experienced the greatest satisfaction when they knew that the daring Spaniard, who had gone to warn his countrymen, had gotten safely away.

Meantime the pirate fleet crept cautiously along the shore, and at last all the vessels cast anchor behind a wooded promontory, where it was concealed from all landward observation.

Kidd then called a midnight council of all his officers aboard his own ship. When all were assembled, Kidd said:

"It is my plan to secretly land our men here, and then march to attack on the landside, the fort, which is about four leagues from the city, and which guards the harbor entrance, as you all know."

CHAPTER XX.

THE ESCAPE OF BERTHA AND ONE OF THE SPANISH SAILORS.

All the officers of the fleet fell in with the plan which Kidd had proposed, and the council soon broke up when it was agreed the landing of the pirates should be made just before dawn.

Arms were distributed, together with a large supply of ammunition. And a small company of men was told off from each crew to remain aboard the vessel to which they belonged, to guard it during the absence of their shipmates.

Having determined to immediately try to get away from Kidd's vessel, Jack sought Bertha and communicated his design to her.

She was ready to go. And with her he proceeded to join White and Lance. They talked together for a few moments in a secluded part of the deck.

It was then decided that one of the Spanish sailors should go with Jack and Bertha. White and Lance could not go, for they had been assigned to the duty of getting up ammunition from the magazine, and their absence would be at once detected.

The night was yet dark and several boats had already been launched, to be in readiness when Kidd issued orders to begin the task of landing the crew.

As captain of the watch, Jack had charge of this duty, and he managed so that Bertha and the Spanish sailor, who was called Gomez, should reach one of these boats while the men near were employed so that they could not observe them.

Bertha and Gomez had taken their places in the boat which Jack had selected, and the young hero was about to follow them, when all at once Captain Kidd appeared and came hastily toward him.

"This way, Jack, my lad! I want you to inspect the arms and attend to giving out the ammunition!" cried the pirate chief, as he saw Jack.

His words were heard by Gomez and Bertha.

Terror of discovery inspired the Spanish sailor, and before the disguised girl could say a word to him, he severed the rope which held the boat with a slash of his cutlass, and seizing the oars rowed away.

All was then noise and commotion on the deck of the pirate ship, owing to the preparations which were being made for disembarking the crew. For this reason no one seemed to hear the sound of Gomez's oars.

But Jack heard these sounds. He knew Gomez had taken the alarm, and pulled away.

At length all the preparations of the pirates were made, and an hour before the dawn the armed crew of the Scorpion was landed. Kidd and Jack left the pirate craft with the last boat load of the men, and it was with deep misgivings that Jack thought death might await him in the battle which he was to be compelled soon to take part in.

When Jack and Captain Kidd landed with the last boat load of the crew from the Scorpion, they found the most of the pirates from the several vessels of the fleet already assembled at the landing place.

And in a very short time the whole pirate army was there.

The Spanish sailor, Miguel, who had left the Scorpion to warn his countrymen of the pirates' intention to capture the fort and pillage the city fulfilled his mission faithfully. But though prepared, they were vastly in the minority, and the battle between the pirates and the Spaniards turned out to be a massacre.

The pirates granted quarter to none.

In the midst of the battle Jack came across Gomez, who had succeeded in getting ashore safely with Bertha, and he turned aside with him and Gomez led Jack to where he had Bertha concealed.

A daring plan now entered Jack's brain.

It was proposed they enter a boat, row back to the Scorpion and capture the vessel, which had only a half dozen pirates on board.

They found Miguel, who entered heartily into the scheme, also White and Lance.

They accordingly secured a boat and rowed to the Scorpion, and, unsuspected by the pirates, were allowed to board. Then at the first opportunity they released two Spanish captives in the hold, and found the French doctor, who had remained on board.

They succeeded in taking the few pirates prisoners and made them jump overboard and swim ashore, after which they raised the anchor.

The wind still blew almost a gale off the land. All hands

turned to, and the sails were unfurled. Soon, under a full spread of canvas, the swift pirate ship, now fallen into honest hands, was sweeping rapidly up the bay.

The Scorpion swept bravely on before the strong and favorable wind, and at length the headlands at the entrance of the bay was left behind, and out into the wide ocean sped the captured ship.

Some of the pirates who had leaped from the deck of Kidd's ship into the sea reached the shore, and they hastened to carry the news of the flight of Jack and his comrades, with the captured ship, to Kidd.

Jack acted as captain of the Scorpion, and he shaped the course of the vessel for the island of Cuba.

Bertha had told him that the relatives whom she was going to join, when she sailed with her guardian from England, resided in Havana, and Jack meant to make that port without delay.

All night long and all the succeeding day the wind which bore the Scorpion on her course did not shift. With the dawn, Jack sought, through his glass, to discover if he was pursued.

But he saw no sail. Evidently knowing, as Kidd did, that the Scorpion could outsail any ship of his fleet, he decided that, with the start she had obtained, she could not be overtaken.

The voyage to Cuba was made by the Scorpion in safety, and at last she entered the port of Havana.

Jack at once went ashore and made a report to the governor. The lad was accompanied by Gomez, the Spaniard, and the capture of the Scorpion was explained. The brave youth and his companions were warmly praised, and the captured vessel was sold to Spanish merchants, and the money received was divided between Jack and his crew.

Bertha's relatives in Havana received her affectionately, and Jack found himself a great hero in their eyes, as well as in the estimation of the people of the city generally when his story became known.

A month later Jack obtained the command of a splendid ship which was fitted out to cruise against the pirates. And he did good service, driving Kidd and his fleet from the West Indies later on.

After a successful cruise Jack returned to Havana, and he and Bertha became man and wife. A happy future opened for them, and as the years went by, they told the thrilling story of the days when they were "Afloat with Captain Kidd" to their children, and saw bright eyes open wide, and eager little faces pale, while yet they listened enthralled, and begged to hear the story over and over again.

Of the fate of Captain Kidd we need only add, not long after the sacking of Maracaibo, which event is an historical fact, Kidd was induced to land in Boston and there he was arrested. Later he was taken to England, where he was tried for piracy. He was duly convicted and subsequently executed.

Next week's issue will contain "MY BROTHER JACK; or, THE LAZY ONE OF THE FAMILY," by Allan Arnold.

SPECIAL NOTICE. All back numbers of this weekly except the following are in print: 1 to 25, 27, 29 to 36, 38 to 40, 42, 43, 45 to 51, 53 to 55, 57 to 60, 62, 64 to 69, 71 to 73, 75, 79, 81, 84 to 86, 88, 89, 91, 92 to 94, 99, 100, 102, 105, 107, 109 to 111, 116, 119, 124 to 126, 132, 139, 140, 143, 163, 166, 171, 179 to 181, 192, 212, 213, 215, 216, 233, 239, 247, 257, 265, 268, 277 294. If you cannot obtain the ones you want from any newsdealer, send the price in money or postage stamps by mail to FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 24 UNION SQUARE, New York, and you will receive the copies you order by return mail.

AN IRON-BOUNDED KEG

OR,

THE ERROR THAT COST A LIFE

By ALEXANDER ARMSTRONG

(CHAPTER VIII—Continued)

As they passed on board the steamer a man who had been coming out to the gangway through the saloon door suddenly saw them.

He quickly dodged back out of sight before Ned could see him and hid behind the doorway.

He was the counterfeiter.

Sam saw him and made him a covert sign, which he readily understood.

A thrill of joy pervaded the little wretch, for he knew that assistance upon which he could rely was near.

The counterfeiter did not fail to observe all their actions, and saw that Sam was a prisoner.

He followed the two through the saloon into the passage-way off which the state-rooms branched, and saw them go directly to the room into which he had lured the deceived girl a short time previously.

Sam opened the door, and Ned beheld the girl lying in a bunk fast asleep from the effect of chloroform.

For an instant the sight threw him off his guard.

He sprang into the room uttering a subdued cry.

It was a fatal move, for his back was hardly turned toward the door when the counterfeiter glided in behind him holding a sponge saturated with the same powerful drug which overwhelmed the unfortunate girl.

Ned heard him and turned.

But the sponge was thrust in his face, the fumes of the drug were inhaled, and he sank down beside the bunk in which the girl lay stupefied.

The two plotters locked the state-room door on the outside, took the key and left the steamer.

Within an hour the vessel swung out in the river with the unconscious detective and girl on board.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DETECTIVE AT SEA.

Ned revived to consciousness, and found Grace laving his throbbing head with a wet towel.

The motion of the steamer convinced him that it was getting out in deep water, too.

A glad cry escaped the girl as he arose on the floor of the stateroom where he had been lying.

"Safe! Safe!" she exclaimed. "Oh, I thought you was dead."

"Grace! We are trapped! This is fearful."

"I feared treachery, Ned, when I found you here."

"We are both victims of Sam Bull."

"What! My good uncle? Impossible!"

"Yet such is the case."

"Oh, I can scarcely believe it, Ned."

"Isn't this proof enough for you."

"But he is a fugitive—"

"Bah! That is part of his plot."

"I cannot understand you, Ned," she faltered.

"Then listen, and I will show how you have been deceived."

The girl said nothing, and Ned then told her all he overheard passing between the dwarf and the counterfeiter.

Her amazement was intense.

She could hardly realize that the hunchback was such a villain, for he had always been kind and considerate to her, although he was a very peculiar man, and had odd ways about him which she did not understand.

"It seems incredible," she said, "for he has always been a good, kind, and considerate uncle—"

"He is not your uncle."

"Not my uncle?"

"No. He was simply a distant relation."

"Why—I always thought—"

"Don't you know anything about your past?"

"Only what Sam Bull told me."

"That was not much, I fancy."

"No. He said I was left an orphan in my infancy and that he had supported me ever since."

"The infamous old liar!"

"Why, Ned, has he deceived me?"

"In some respects."

"Do you know anything about me?"

"Yes. Your mother died during your infancy, and left you an enormous fortune to the care of Bull. He has evidently taken better care of the money you are to get than he has cared for you."

"How strange he never told me."

"Not at all. This plot is the outcome of his rascality. To day you are of age, and inherit the money. Hence he wants you put out of the way so that he can keep possession of it, for now that you have gained your majority, you could demand it of him."

"How do you know all this, Ned?"

"Oh, I discovered it accidentally."

"And my father?"

"He, too, is dead, and leaves a sad history."

"Can you tell me what it is?"

"You will best understand all by reading this letter."

He handed William Greenwood's confession to the girl, and she eagerly perused it to the end.

Her face was quite pale when she concluded and handed the letter back to Ned.

"I understand all now," said she, "and I know that my unfortunate father must have met with some misfortune since you have got that paper."

"You are right, Grace. He is dead."

"Poor father. Could I have only been with him, he might not have become such a man. But when and where did he die, and how came you to get that confession?"

"He was murdered."

"Great Heaven! Killed?"

"Stabbed to the heart!"

"By whom?"

"I fear Sam Bull did it."

"When did the tragedy occur?"

"Within a few days past."

"Whereabouts?"

"In the cellar, beneath the house you lived in."

"My gracious!"

"I will explain to you all the circumstances."

It only occupied a few moments to detail to the girl all he had discovered, and when he finished, the girl said:

"I do not know anything about the cellar, nor did I hear anything of any fighting down there. But I know that Sam Bull is capable of setting any one crazy."

"How do you mean?" eagerly asked the detective.

"He invents patent medicines frequently," she replied, "and is always experimenting. Among the many curious decoctions he has patented, is one composed of two substances, one called Picrotoxine, and the other Dhatoora. Once the stuff is introduced into a person's system, it leaves them demented."

"Are you sure of this?" eagerly asked Ned.

"Haven't I seen him operate it on animals?"

"Then there must be an antidote for it?"

"Yes. Sam has got it."

"You must secure some of it, or poor Jim may remain a hopeless maniac all his life."

"No, not a life time, only until the effect wears away."

"In that case Sam has drugged him. That mystery is solved at last. The hunchback has some scheme in view. I firmly believe he means to fly the country in a short time, as all his preparations are made only for temporary relief."

"Do you think Sam killed my father?"

"Such is my firm belief."

"Then when we get back to New York you will arrest him?"

"By all means. That reminds me—we must get ashore."

"But how are we to do it?"

"If we are not too far from land we can go back with the pilot if he is yet on board. Come out on deck."

He led the girl from the state-room, and they encountered a tremendous list of passengers.

Out on deck they found the day far advanced, and the huge steamer dashing toward Romer's Reef.

In the distance the Jersey highlands and the seaboard of Long Island were plainly visible over the rolling sea.

The detective inquired of a deck hand for the captain, and was informed that the officer was up forward.

Ned soon found him just giving some orders.

"Captain," said he, "I am a government detective and this young lady is the victim of a scoundrel who planned to ship her to Europe."

"You don't say so!" said the surprised officer.

"Neither of us want to cross the ocean, but must get back to New York to frustrate the rascal and save a fortune he is robbing of this young lady. Moreover, the man is a murderer, and unless I catch him he may baffle the ends of justice by escaping."

"But, my dear fellow, I can't send my vessel back."

"Can't we go with the pilot?"

"He is gone."

"Gone? When did he go?"

"A few minutes ago. See, there is his boat."

A large row-boat was riding over the waves a short distance away, with two men in it.

Ned's heart sank for a moment, but a plan suggested itself to his fertile mind, and he said:

"Will you slow up and signal him with the whistle?"

"Yes. That is the best I can do, though."

Ned's heart began to beat fast, for if the pilot failed to come back and catch up with the steamer he would have but little chance to get back.

The captain walked over to the pilot-house and spoke to the quartermaster, who rang down to the engineer, and blew the signal blasts on the great whistles, causing the pilot to look up.

Ned signaled them as the engineer began to slacken speed, and his heart bounded with delight when he saw the long boat come about and dart through the waves toward the steamer.

Slower proceeded the *Furnessia*, and the long boat flashed through the waves toward her.

The detective watched the boat creeping toward the steamer, and, turning toward the girl, he said in low, joyful tones:

"We are not lost yet, Grace."

"Where will they take us to?" the girl asked.

"Over to Rockaway Inlet."

"It will be easy to get back from there."

"Very. Ah, we are slowing up."

"And the row-boat is catching up to us."

"You are all right now, sir," said the captain.

"I appreciate your kindness, sir."

"Don't mention it. I want to see all criminals punished."

"Shall I let down the rope ladder, sir?" asked the mate.

"By all means. Now, Miss, stand ready to go down."

Over went the ladder on the port side, the end trailing in the water, and Ned said:

"I hope you are not afraid, Grace?"

"No. I've a steady head, Ned."

"All ready, sir," announced the mate.

A guide rope was lowered with the ladder, and a couple of men were called to steady it.

The detective went down the ladder, and the girl followed him, while a crowd of passengers were attracted to the spot by the slowing of the steamer.

The pilot boat came up presently, and was held to the ladder while Ned and Grace embarked.

Thanks were called out to the captain, who bowed politely, and the pilot boat darted away from the side of the steamer. The rope ladder was hauled up again, and, as the gong sounded, the vessel was put under full pressure of steam, and started off on her long journey again.

Left alone with the pilot and his assistant, Ned turned to them and explained matters.

"We ain't agoin' in right away," said the pilot, "as I'm ter wait fer a ship wots got ter be piloted inter harbor. But we'll take yer over ter Barren Island, an' yer kin git back ter New York from there easy enough."

"Anything," said Ned, "and we will be truly grateful for any favor that way."

The boat fairly flew over the rolling waves, and in due course of time it reached the Rockaway inlet.

They were landed at Barren Island, and there caught a small steam tug that brought them to Canarsie at the head of Jamaica Bay, from whence they took a wretched train to Brooklyn, and there caught the elevated cars to the ferry.

As they crossed over to Grand street the shadows of twilight were falling upon the scene.

"You cannot go home again," the detective said to the girl, "for our only hope now to discover what Sam Bull's plans are is to let him imagine you and I have gone across the Atlantic."

"But what will I do?" asked the girl in dismay.

"Stop at some hotel."

"I can't. I have no money."

"Don't let that trouble you. I will pay your expenses. As soon as I recover your money from Sam Bull you will not be in want. You can then repay me."

"You are so good to me, Ned, I can never repay—"

"Do not forget that you are to become my wife."

"How can I?"

"Bless you, Grace! And now, a warning."

"What is it?"

"You must take a fictitious name."

"Very well, Ned."

"Never go out unveiled."

"I won't."

"And I will have to disguise myself."

"I will do whatever you direct me to."

"Then you need fear no harm to befall you."

When the boat touched the New York side they entered a carriage and were driven up-town to a nice hotel, where the girl was registered and left.

Ned then went down to headquarters.

He gave the chief an account of what had befallen him and told all he learned.

"The case is as plain as daylight now," said the chief when he finished. "Sam Bull is playing for the girl's fortune. He probably killed Bank Note Bill, who is doubtless Grace's father, so that he could not interfere with his plot. But if he set Jim crazy and you can find the means of restoring him to his senses, perhaps he can clear up all the mystery there seems to be attached to the case."

"I'll do my best to end this matter, sir."

"What is your next move?"

"I'll keep quiet for a day or so."

"Disguised?"

"By all means, inspector."

"That ought to throw Sam off his guard."

"Yes. Can't you have him shadowed by a spotter?"

"A good suggestion, Ned—I'll do it."

"Have the counterfeiters confessed anything?"

"No. They are all old jail birds, and keep mum."

"I won't waste to-night, though."

"What are you going to do?"

"Drag the river for the iron-bound keg."

"Ah—yes. We ought to know what is in it."

"I know a couple of river men who will do the work for me, and I can put on one of their rigs to avoid being recognized."

The detective then left the Central office.

He made his way down to the river, and going to a junk shop on Front street, he was met by a rough looking man who knew who he was.

He explained what he wanted to the man.

"Drag der river, hey? O' course! Hey, Butsey!"

"Wha' d'yer want?" growled a smothered voice.

"Bring out dem grapnels an' put 'em in de boat."

"Orright, Slob."

Butsey prepared the ropes, hooks, rakes and other essentials, while Ned explained to Slob that an iron-bound keg was wanted from the bottom of the river near where the sewer emptied into the stream.

"Why, yair. How'd dis do ter keep yer own togs clean?"

Slob hauled out a begrimed suit and hat from a heap of rubbish, and Ned put them on over his own clothing, completely changing his appearance.

His looks resembled those of Butsey and Slob.

The boat was soon ready.

It was moored in a slip across the street, and Ned went over

with Slob and found Butsey seated in the boat awaiting their coming with a glum face.

The oars were shipped, and the boat shot out on the placid river, beneath a starry sky.

All along the water front a string of varied colors slanted down from the bulkhead lanterns, and passing boats cast reflections from their windows upon the brine in dancing sheens.

The river men kept in the shadow of the spiles both rowing, and Ned sitting in the stern sheets.

"Wot's in der keg, boss?" asked Slob, suddenly.

"Scrap-iron," said Ned, at a hazard.

"Den it's heavy?"

"It ought to be."

"An' wot are we ter git fer dis job?"

"Will five dollars do you?"

"I reckon it will—hey, Butsey?"

Butsey grunted an unintelligible assent.

"It may be sunk in the mud now," said Ned.

"Orter be. Dere's a power o' mud where de sewer empties."

"Will you have much trouble to fish it up?"

"Not if it ain't buried too deep in—hey, Butsey?"

Another unintelligible grunt from Butsey was the reply.

"I want you to keep the matter quiet, too," said Ned.

"Oh, we'll keep still as clams, sir."

"I know I can depend on you."

"Well, I reckon yer can—hey, Butsey?"

Once more Butsey assented with an unintelligible grunt.

Then they rowed on in silence again.

Within a short time they came to the sewer opening, and as the tide was high, the circular opening was half submerged.

"Now where's der spot?" asked Slob.

Ned looked around and pointed at where the keg struck.

"Search over there first," said he.

The men moored their boat at the indicated spot.

Then the grapnels were sent down, caught something heavy, and they drew it to the surface.

It struck the side of the boat, and Ned eagerly looked over, expecting to see the iron-bound keg.

But a cry of startled surprise pealed from his lips.

It was not the keg.

But it was a corpse.

The body of a man.

Bank Note Bill.

The detective was thrilled at this unexpected sight.

When Sam Bull sent it adrift in the sewer he did not know it was going to sink there where the detective was destined to find it.

CHAPTER X.

THE CORPSE AND THE KEY.

The night was so clear and starry that Ned could easily discern every feature of the dead man, and a shiver of disgust pervaded him as he glanced at the bloated face.

How came the body to be out of the vault, into the river?

What had become of the vault?

These and other perplexing questions arose to Ned's mind.

He drew the body closer, and loosening the grapnel from the clothing, he tied a rope to the leg so that he would not lose the corpse, and said to Slob:

"It is the body of a man."

"Gosh! A floater, hey?"

"Yes. I know who he is, what is more."

"Dang me, that's queer—hey, Butsey?"

Butsey grunted by way of assent, and looked glum.

"We must send the body to the morgue when we finish here."

(This story to be continued in our next issue.)

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